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LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG LADY;

IN WHICH

THE DUTIES AND CHARACTER OF WOMEN ARE CONSIDERED,

CHIEFLY WITH

A REFERENCE TO PREVAILING OPINIONS,

BY MRS. WEST,

AUTHOR OF "LETTERS TO A YOUNG MAN," &c.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

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LETTERS,

&c. &c. &c.

LETTER XI.

On Conversation, Society, and Friendship.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

Two advantages are annexed to literary pursuits; first, as they tend to improve those wonderful faculties by which we are distinguished from the brute creation, to our own comfort; and, secondly, as knowledge is calculated to make us more agreeable and pleasing in the eyes of our fellow-creatures.

It has always been the unfortunate error of mankind, to bestow most care and attention on what, in their calmer moments, they confess is least deserving solicitude. Thus it happens, that the present world gains the ascendancy of the future; that agreeableness procures more admirers than desert; and that the appearance of enjoyment is preferred to the reality. The same erroneous judgement has elevated the secondary end of study into undue ascendancy; and hence it cannot be wondered at, that when the superstructure is not founded on a really enlightened intellect, a good heart, and a corrected temper, the desire of pleasing and the passion for shining should be confounded. Nothing is more natural to an ingenuous soul, than a wish to be thought amiable by all with whom we converse. To have our approach hailed with the smile of undisguised complacence, and our departure deprecated by

something less equivocal than the ceremonious entreaty of good breeding, constitutes a species of personal importance which even a stoic can but *affect* to despise. But I must tell the young lady whose whole soul is engrossed by the determination of pleasing, that this propensity will carry her beyond the desired goal. Admiration and affection are very distinct sentiments: you cannot excite the former in any considerable degree without alarming a host of competitors, who, being engaged in the same pursuit, will narrowly investigate your conduct; and if any indirect steps, or unfounded pretensions, can be discovered, you must dread the consequences of vigilant scrutiny. Affection, on the other hand, is *won* not *vanquished*; when we cherish it, we indulge ourselves, instead of paying homage to others. It has the agreeable property of veiling those imperfections which the envy attached to admiration

never fails to expose. It is therefore better adapted to the disposition of our sex, who must ever feel their desire of éclat checked by the timid apprehension of reproach. We cannot stray far from that privacy which is our happiest and most natural soil, without incurring danger.

The love of admiration has never been more prejudicial to women, than in the article of literary pursuits; for knowledge and understanding are distinctions, of which the lords of the creation are highly tenacious; and they are most unwilling to allow, that more than a few particles of those precious metals can possibly unite with that vast preponderance of quicksilver irritability, which they affirm constituted the stamina of the superadduced rib. Though I verily believe there are many more male than female pedants, and though

I maintain that our understandings are equally well adapted to the duties that we are called upon to perform, and therefore cannot in strictness be denominated *inferior*; I would wish my sex to remember, that advantageous reading, being peculiar and personal, may be enjoyed in its fullest extent, without exciting those constant attendants of celebrity, detraction and scurrility. I wish also to add, that by securing those principal ends of study, the secondary uses follow of necessity. She who has really improved her understanding, her principles, and her temper, by knowledge or science, must be courted as a companion and loved as a friend; and though the general diffusion of literature, and increased liberality of opinion (I do not now use that word ironically), permit our sex to display acquirements that would formerly have been deemed ridiculous, it is certainly safer for us, as a general

rule, to consider science rather as the *mirror* of Juno, by which she attired herself for Jove, than as the lambent flame which played around the head of Iulus, and *distinguished* him from his young compeers. The enlightening of our understandings should not be our first aim when we enter upon a course of study. Our distinctions as moral and immortal beings, are superior to the faculty of enlarged intelligence; our hearts and lives, therefore, should be amended through the medium of our intellectual powers, or we read and reflect in vain. Improved capacity always implies increased responsibility: knowledge is a most precious talent, and must pay the highest premium. The errors of ignorance are sometimes an excuse for crimes; but the backslidings of sapience ever imply criminality.

Is it not safer then to remain ignorant? Certainly not; for the *consciousness* of

ignorance is a *degree* of knowledge; and an indolent preference of darkness to light, when we are convinced that we sit in darkness, betrays also a consciousness that we *know* our deeds to be evil. Sincerity of intention must accompany mental imbecility, or its weakness is no apology.

The advantages of a relish for literature are most forcibly felt in solitude and in old age; the inconveniences * attached to both these situations are seldom successfully parried, unless by those who to the blessing of a clear conscience add the variety of gratifications which a well-cultivated mind can supply. While we live in the gay world, or even in domestic society, we are only one of a pic-nic party; and the trouble of the entertainment is so diminished by the number of *contributors*, as to prevent us from thinking how it has been provided. But when, like a

* See Letter 15th.

Canadian settler, we are confined to our own log-house, prudential preparations for the ensuing winter assume a most serious aspect, and become interwoven with the care of our existence. We must have oil for our lamps, covering for our beds, and fuel for our fire; we want cordials to exhilarate us, food to strengthen us, employments to exercise our bodies, and expectations to stimulate our minds, besides medicinal provision for accidental sickness or calamity. To drop the allusion: what a fund of innate cheerfulness, tranquillity, energy, and contentment, is necessary for those who hope to live comfortably by themselves, especially for such as continue to ruminate when all the powers of activity are suspended, or finally destroyed! Happy the mind which at such a period can turn inward, and contemplate those forms of "perfect, fair, and good," which a correct judgment

sketched in early life on the still *undefaced* tablet of memory!

We will pursue this theme in the conclusion of our correspondence. It is my present intention to proceed from literary acquirements, to the field in which they publicly display themselves: I mean conversation. Now, though information certainly adds a thousand delicacies "to the feast of reason and the flow of soul," it should be like the charms of our general mother, "not obvious, not obtrusive, but retired." Like the sylphs that accompanied Belinda in her acquatic triumph *, it may add a multitude of minute graces to the nymph around whom it hovers; but, unless in the select parties of private friendship, it must rarely assume so dense a body as to be discernible by vulgar eyes. Nor must it (presuming on its ethereal origin) affect a contempt for those earth-

* See Rape of the Lock.

born gnomes yclept household cares; which, though far less rarefied than the rays of science, are quite as necessary to the comforts of animal existence. By way of closing the competition which has long subsisted between the soaring daughter of genius, the slatternly metaphysician, the "square-elbowed family drudge," and the light-robed nymph of fashion, suppose we take some of the distinct qualities of each, and with them form a female paragon, permitting conversation to *unite* the brilliant, the profound, the useful, and the trifling; for, I fear, whoever determines to exclude any of these ingredients will deprive the compound of an agreeable zest or balsamic property. Conversation was never so happily allegorised as by a resemblance to a collection of musical instruments; and I believe we never return from a pleasant intellectual concert, without acknowledging that our gratifica-

tion proceeded from its *variety* as well as its sweetness. We felt obliged to the leading kettle-drum (provided she did not play too long or too loud,) as well as too the harmonizing flute; and the sprightly kit would have given us less amusement, had it not been contrasted with the sober strains of the virginal*.

It has been remarked, that though in this age of equalization one rank slides into another in the article of dress, luxury, and amusement, conversation still preserves its *aristocratical* distinctions; and I am afraid that my inveterate dislike of democracy will be deduced from the observation I am going to make, that it would have been well for society, if the

* See Tatler, vol. 3. no 153. I cannot for this reason approve the hymeneal scheme which the ingenious author subjoins. Who, for Heaven's sake, could live with a drum and kettle drum, or endure the monotony of a bagpipe and castanets?

politeness and accommodation of our superiors were as imitable, as the form of their attire or the arrangements of their tables. Purposing to say much upon this head, it will be expedient to qualify the bitter potion by a previous introduction of what is so palatable to human pertinacity; I mean the abuse of those who are above us. And to begin with a subject which will I am sure be *popular*, courtiers are proverbially *insincere* in their smiles and promises; and whoever builds on their favour more than convenience warrants, erects "the baseless fabric of a vision." Something has been said in favour of these proscribed beings, who are professionally exposed to solicitation, and politically restrained from offending suitors by refusals; but as I write for the middle orders, I shall leave the exculpation of the great to their own professed advocates, and condemn the folly of those who

continue to become the dupes of what the experience of all ages assures us is synonymous to the trackless wind,—I mean the affability of great ladies and the promises of great men. The language of high life, like its apparent good humour, is uniform and local; and when a plain character ventures into the enchanted labyrinth, he should carry with him an explanatory vocabulary adapted to the society that he mixes with, as constantly as a traveller does an interpreter when he ventures into a foreign country with whose language he is unacquainted. Courtliness of expression is so essential an adjunct to highly polished manners, that it rarely incurs the guilt of deception, unless some stray bourgeois adventurer wanders among these "gorgeous dames and barons bold," with enough native vanity to be credulous. Did this ourang-outang (for so, with permission, I long to tell him he is consi-

dered by *pretended* admirers,) but confine his expectations to momentary enjoyment, his wishes might be gratified; but if, like the ambassador of Bantam, he will explain "devoted humble servant" according to the lingo of his own hemisphere, he must painfully discover that, instead of the bower of Acrasia, he has only been bewildered in "Fool's Paradise."

As it would be absurd to seek among "high-lived company" for what its constitutional laws compel it to disclaim, sincerity; let us confine our censures to the defects which those laws must acknowledge to be essential. The spoiled children of opulence and prosperity are too apt to sink all other faculties in the capacity of enjoyment; and being pleasant or interesting are, in their opinion, superior qualities to being estimable or improving. Hence, among the high circles, conversation is more like a *déjeuné* than an old

Engliſh repast; it abounds in bon-bons and syllabubs: it is deficient in substantials. We all know that a subject should not be quite exhausted, nor an idea fairly run down: but certainly, as starting a multitude of game disappoints instead of delighting the sportsman; so extreme volatility and mutability in the subjects that we discuss render conversation *fatiguing*, rather than *delightful*. *Good things* lose their effect, unless contrasted by *sound words*; and they both appear more brilliant when relieved by a back ground of *common sense*. As with the sensations of fruition and delight, "'Tis bliss but to a certain bound, beyond, is agony;" so wit and vivacity exhaust the powers of enjoyment, unless placid ease and benevolent feeling are allowed to unstring the high-toned imagination.

The quality that is most striking in very refined conversation is, the art of

always seeming pleased and happy; and, of course, the general air of complacency that is diffused over the scene. Now, though I am convinced that the gentle tone of approbation is often but the cover for inward discontent, and that disgust lurks in the dimple of placid delight; I still maintain, that only *apparent* satisfaction communicates hilarity to others, and contributes to diffuse the external requisites of pleasure. Ill humour, being considered under her political character of ill breeding, can only venture into the higher circles in masquerade. It being impossible to exterminate the canker brood of this hydra, I wish that the laws of social intercourse were every where so strict, as to compel them to *disguise* their joy-expelling properties in every party.

The licentiousness of patrician conversation is a fruitful theme for popular decla-

mation; but I hope, as the publicity attached to dissoluteness of manners engenders an unfounded credulity as to the universality of depravity; so the notoriety of any breach of decency, where we expected decorum, misdirects the tide of virtuous indignation, and teaches us to deplore the frequency, instead of the perversity, of profligacy. It is a public calamity, when depravity of sentiment or manners is accompanied by such fascinating graces of behaviour, as must persuade many weak minds, that what is so very attractive cannot be very wrong. Here, as in the case of knowledge, the guilt is increased by the refinement of the offender. Those attractions of deportment, which naturally draw the delighted eye of every beholder, proclaim the mind to be capable of all the nice reserves and keen sensibilities of virtuous feeling. A man of true taste will not think a woman completely charming,

unless, when in a serious mood, he could describe her as having

"Grace in all steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love;"*

and shall grace, piety, dignity, and benevolence sparkle in the eye, step, and gesture, yet never shed their divine influence over the *lips* and the *heart?* What a laborious mimic is she, who, through life, either affects what she does not feel, or acts in constant opposition to her feelings; who paints the pallid cheek of licentiousness with the blush of modesty, conceals the furious glare of guilty passions under the saintly glance of purity, and pours the language of ribaldry from the cherubic lips of innocence! With half the pains that she takes to *astonish* a

* This favourite definition of beauty has been inserted in Letter 4th, though not exactly in the same manner.

world which at once wonders at and abhors her, she might procure the esteem of the virtuous, and the approbation of her own heart.

The unhappy propensity to copy the defects of celebrated characters, instead of their excellencies, has greatly affected the lower ranks of life in the particular of indecorum. Yet I may venture to assure the members of all the fashionable pandæmoniums, who affect the language of infernals, that *originality* in indelicacy has not raised them to that "bad eminence." They may, indeed, boast of dressing up Billingsgate slang, or Wapping sentiment, in better phrase or gaudier colours; but those seminaries are the only endowed colleges absolutely devoted to the science of obscenity; and it is in the power of the lowest of human beings to be profane and immoral. I gladly quit a most disgusting subject, to attend to the real

advantages that are usually annexed to polished conversation.

We will begin by considering, on what principles the superiority of polished conversation over the ruder habits of society is founded; and since good sense, intelligence, and humour, are national characteristics by no means confined to any rank, we must conclude that it arises more from the manner than the matter of what is said. Every one must allow this, who considers how differently an anecdote or an observation sounds when dressed in good language, and accompanied by an agreeable manner, from what the same tale or sentiment does when stripped of these ornaments. A remark originally insignificant, may become witty, sarcastic, stupid or luminous, according to the humour of the repeater. Though, in fictitious stories, we are at liberty so to vary the narrative as to heighten the effect;

when we aim at the elucidation of character, or recitation of fact, singleness of heart must proscribe every designed variation. The disgrace which fashionable manners affix to downright falsehood deserves general imitation. Let us now proceed to the minutiæ of good breeding.

Authors are supposed (or rather have been required) to qualify themselves for writing by previous reading; and I believe it is esteemed essential for a speaker in conversation, first to serve a probationary apprenticeship in the character of a hearer. The term of this initiatory state is generally supposed to expire with our teens; yet a frequent return to the manners of pupilage is one of the rules which distinguish a very well bred person; attentive silence to a speaker being one of the most *fundamental* laws of politeness. Let me just hint a situation, in which prudence requires you to act contrary to

the *ostensible* expectation. If you should ever be introduced to some one who has expressed great admiration of you, and a vast inclination for your society, remember that these words properly translated, mean a *craving desire to be known to you;* and you will find the art of hearing the most essential requisite at such an interview. Woe be to the wight who prepares herself for this introduction by a store of just remarks and acute observations! The inspecting party is then sure to return dissatisfied, and full of complaint that people never *answer* expectation. But if she resolve so to husband her faculties, as to confine intelligence to *acquiescence*, and discernment to *compliment*, she will infallibly rise in the scale of wonders to something that is supernatural. These precautionary admonitions are only meant to intimate that vanity is universal, and to teach the *gazer* and the *gazed at* to

scrutinize their own hearts. But to return to the valuable ordinances of polite manners: when information, authority, or talent, assumes the *oracular chair*, it behoves the rest of the company to commence *auditors;* the right and the time for occupying it should indeed be limited by sound judgment; but unless the usurpation be very manifest, and very tiresome, inattention or interruption are considered as more flagrant breaches of the laws of good manners, than those which they voluntarily attempt to chastise.

Attention to engagements and promises might be referred to the indissoluble ties of moral honesty; but it rarely happens that people apply those important considerations to trifles; and yet let me again repeat the truism, that it is in trifles that virtue is most conspicuous. Versatility in petty obligations gives a most unfavourable idea of the moral character, and

generally designates a person on whom one can place, nodependance. The inconveniences which little breaches of punctuality cause in society are, however, of themselves sufficient to determine the culpability of such laxity of mind, even if it never proceeded to more enormous acts of prevarication. A person who breaks an engagement seldom reflects on the inconveniences that he causes; he may be compared to a stone thrown into a pool, which disturbs circle after circle till the whole surface is discomposed. Do you recollect Steele's excellent paper upon this subject, in which he censures his own acknowledged failing (the parent, perhaps, of his still more criminal errors) with all the frankness and all the irresolution of lively feeling and culpable inconstancy?

Among the rougher forms of society, it is not unfrequent to hear civility and sincerity contrasted, as if they were in

their natures irreconcilable; but we only require common sense, and a good disposition, to render a well-bred person as inartificial as the rudest Joan Blunt that ever harrowed up our feelings under the pretence of telling us her mind. I am convinced that vulgarity is oftener *artful* than *ingenuous*. The foundation of polite behaviour should be laid in the christian precept of "in honour preferring one another;" which extends the obligation of civility to all the world: friends and enemies, strangers and acquaintance, superiors and inferiors; all have an equal demand to have their intercourse with us regulated by the rules of decorum. Obedience to these laws is no infraction of the higher claims of truth and justice, affection and gratitude. The common offices of life may be conducted with urbanity and gentleness, though love and confidence are reserved for friendship. If we have oc-

casion to meet a person with whom we are at enmity, we need not scowl defiance with our eyes, or awaken his passions by menaces or insult. We have certainly no right to disturb the peace of any society by our *previous* quarrels: bitterness does but increase the difficulty of reconciliation; while a pleasant word, or a civil attention, at an occasional interview, have often been known to dissipate wrath and vanquish disgust. Judicious persons will preserve this general habit of complacency, without forfeiting sincerity; they will avoid expressing particular regard, or soliciting particular intimacy, in cases where the heart does not dictate the request; nor will they fall into the very common method of indiscriminate offers of service, which are generally taken in a still more enlarged extent than they are designed. A few general rules seem to constitute the fundamentals of agreeable manners. We

should be careful neither to offend, nor to mislead those with whom we converse. Now if our behaviour be not *assumed*, but the genuine effect of a humble and benevolent heart, though we may err in some of those minute points which custom has introduced and experience sanctioned, we never can be guilty of any great lapses. When the heart dictates the external carriage, it cannot be artificial; and simplicity not only charms all beholders, but is an accredited passport to really good society.

An adherence to the precept of "in honour preferring one another," will certainly repress ostentation, which is one of the most fruitful, and, let me add, most vulgar sources of our social solecisms. Whoever meet company with an intention of making a display, may rest assured that, though there is a chance of their being so fortunate as to astonish a *few*, they will be sure

to displease *many*. The native pride of human nature renders us very hostile to the claims of superiority; and if it appear but in the shape of an ornament, it is sure to have its pretensions contested. The same may be observed of every natural or acquired eminence, unless the envied distinction is so enveloped in modesty and complacence, as to diminish all the invidious effects of superiority; but these, indeed, generally accompany a genuine claimant to particular regard. The equilibrium of society is oftener destroyed by the preponderance of *noisy* pretenders, than by the acknowledged gravity of wit, taste, elegance, or information. The cawing rooks outscream the sweet warblings of the nightingale.

The desire of calling forth *all* the latent talents of the party, by an exhilarating attention to every individual of whom it is composed, is a principal cause of the zest

of that refined society where, indisputably, we ought to search for the *advantages*, as well as the *laws*, of good breeding. The motive for endeavouring to make every one pleased with himself may be selfish; but the effect is grateful to all. When this duty is well understood and practised by the host and hostess, a general suavity of look and manner is sure to be the consequence. Would it not be advisable, if, in certain walks of life, the provision for the animal part of the entertained were diminished, and more solicitude shown for the preparation of mental delicacies? A plain dinner, seasoned with sense and cheerfulness, is infinitely preferable to a thousand luxuries served with the languid air of fatigued ostentation.

Young women who copy their gentility from faulty models are extremely apt to suppose that fastidiousness is a proof of taste; or else, that excessive laughing

demonstrates a prodigious deal of wit, or a monstrous quantity of good humour. The first of these mistaken fashionists, like Dr. Johnson's Anthea, predetermines to *spoil* every party, to *meet* with nothing right, and, in fact, to realize the power attributed to the toad, of extracting poison from every object. The gigglers belong to the gregarious tribe of animals; they generally lurk in holes and corners, to the vast annoyance of all forlorn-looking people, who, however worthy or intelligent, must not hope to escape the denomination of quizzes, and consequently become lawful prey. Having never been informed that real wit or innocent vivacity is even *suspected* of exciting this local merriment, I suppose those naturalists may be right who maintain, that as the female glow-worm possesses the qualfty of shining, in order to point out her retreat to her winged mate, so these earth-born

nymphs, possessing no inherent brightness, have the defect supplied by a sort of sympathetic laughter; for it is observed, that the appearance of a beau *increases* the convulsion even to *apparent* agony. I might apply severer terms to the affectedly discontented, or the affectedly gay; but probably my admonition will have greater weight when I simply tell them that their manners are *ungenteel.* Would they but let "nature be their goddess," their distresses would interest, and their hilarity would please; we should not then be disgusted by a capricious adoption of fashionable words or tonish phrases; nor should we see muscular contractions and hideous gestures assumed, under the lamentable idea that they constitute beauty and elegance.

Nothing shows propriety of judgment more than estimating the opinion of the world at its *true value.* Young people

are extremely apt to err in this particular, either by despising what others say of them, or by making too great sacrifices to obtain applause. Another error is in their calling their own "little set the world." Many a young woman has been irretrievably confirmed in her faults by the flattery of her own acquaintance, who have taught her to consider the reproofs of her true friends as the censure of spiteful, ill-natured, narrow-minded tabbies. To this cause we must ascribe the diffusive imitation of fashionable awkwardnesses, and that confident style of assertion which so distinguishes the vulgar girls of the present time. It shows pride and yet poverty of judgement, engendered by local and circumscribed observation, and fostered by the opinion of congregated triflers, whom the habits of this age allow to prate in full assembly, instead of stitching their samplers at home, as the manners of past

times compelled their grandmothers to do. If folly be indeed the predominant feature of the human race, we must lament the relaxation of that discipline which gave it, by restraint, the *exterior* of wisdom. It is not true, however, that the majority of women are incapable of thinking right; it is because the leading principles of modern education do not put their ideas into a right train for profitable reflection. The opinion of the world, or rather that of connoisseurs, is courted on the score of accomplishments; why not, then, aim to acquire the approbation of sound judges in manners and morals? Propriety and elegance are determinable by laws as unalterable as those of the Persians, however they may be supposed to be subject to the light decrees of fashion, by those who confound essentials with appendages. A bold stare, a masculine swing, a projected chin, and curvated

shoulders, cannot present the outline or the movements of Grecian grace and symmetry. A few *dear loves* may pronounce the *sweet creature* quite captivating, and the very essence of the present mode; but genuine taste will join with the aunts and grandmothers of the party, in protesting against all distortions of the human figure, under the false notion of improvement. I question whether her interdict against the stiff bridle, and swimming step, of former times, was promulgated with half such severity.

But affectation is only one of the methods by which self-conceit displays its conscious importance. Egotism belongs to the same error of undue self-preference; it is not indeed quite so dogmatical as pertinacity, nor so disgusting as distortion; but we cannot admire the monotonous bell of the pack-horse, although it do not harass us like the

grating of a grindstone, or deafen us with the thunder of a fulling mill. Nothing upon earth is so dull and tiresome as long histories about our own petty perplexities; narratives that possess neither interest, humour, nor instruction; especially when interlarded (as is generally the case) with a plentiful quantum of self-praise. We need not, however, absolutely banish self from conversation, though it must be prohibited from assuming the port of a heroine, either on account of uncommon merit or singular disasters. I once knew an instance, in which egotism was made so infinitely agreeable, that the listeners were never weary of its narratives; but then it was introduced to correct its own foibles, somewhat in the disguise of a jack-pudding, and it recounted, not *wonders*, but *mockeries*. This would, however, be a dangerous expedient to all who had not sufficient strength and

dignity of character to check merriment before it approached the confines of contempt. This was eminently the case with the Lady that I allude to; at whom the most impertinent witling could not laugh one moment longer than she condescended to fiddle for his amusement. She possessed the art of showing us, in all her ludicrous narratives of her own dilemmas, that the ridicule attached to the whimsical situation in which she was placed, and not to her own inherent folly. When humour can be thus managed, it assumes that shape of *harmless playfulness*, which is the most exhilarating cordial of the soul.

If ever, then, we happen to be seized with an invincible desire of talking of ourselves in company, let us be sure to render the theme very agreeable. This cannot be done by putting on our best array, by paint or by patches. No cre-

dit will be given us for the witty things which we protest we said or did on such an occasion; the tale "smells of the lamp;" and our injudiciousness in repeating former triumphs destroys our credibility. A really clever woman has no occasion to employ the past tense in suing for her credentials of intelligence. Do we not, by so doing, expose ourselves to the retort which Esop tells us silenced the lying traveller, who boasted of his agility in Rhodes, by the company begging him to consider the present occasion as a proper scene for an *original* exhibition of talent?

Conversation resembles, in many particulars, a game of chance. The best players are those who, still keeping in view the established rules, adapt themselves to accidental variations with skill and adroitness. Whoever engages in it with a stedfast resolution of making particular strokes, or ties himself down by

a preconcerted manner, will be sure to lose; and he who resolves to keep the game in his own hands plays unfairly. "A civil guest," says the old poet, "will neither talk all nor eat all the feast." When we talk, let us consider rather what will be *requisite* for us to say, than what we shall be *gratified* in saying. After keeping the ball in our hand a due time, let us resign it to another player, and only occasionally catch it in its rebound. But let us, in that case, beware of arresting it by too hard a blow. Petty contradictions are not the spur, but the quietus, of agreeable conversation. They proceed from a habit formed in early life, to which parents in the middle ranks of society are never sufficiently attentive. If half the pains that are taken in teaching young women accomplishments were bestowed on the regula-

tion of their tempers, and the improvement of their manners, our social pleasures would receive most valuable improvements. It is to be lamented, that this most teasing habit often distinguishes very worthy people, who adopt it from a mistaken regard to truth and sincerity. As these are especially apt to suppose that a domestic party releases every body from all restraints, they frequently contrive to convert a family meeting into a battle royal; somewhat resembling the contest of a brood of turkey pouts, in which every one gets pecked, and none discover for what reason. The most miserable fate, however, awaits a stranger, who, supposing this engagement to proceed from secret enmity, unfortunately interferes to restore peace, and does not, till after he has received the rebuffs of *every* combatant, discover that they were all the while *cackling* in perfect friendship.

This humour generally breaks out in the midst of some narrative, in which the repeater is interrupted with something quite as unessential as Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skegg's elucidations of Lady Blarney's crim. con. story, in the Vicar of Wakefield; and as both parties instantly quit the main point, to ascertain the verity of the appendage, all the spirit of the tale (if it ever had any) instantly evaporates, and leaves the combatants to fight over a dead body, like the heroic Greeks and magnanimous Trojans. A love of detailing wonders (another lamentable fault in conversation) is extremely apt to rouse this contradictious spirit, which really is a sort of wildfire very liable to agitation, irresistible in its progress, and incapable of extinction until it has consumed all the fuel within its reach. It is not always harmless, unless it is kindled among the weeds which

overrun a rich but neglected soil. We may deduce family dissensions, breach of friendship, nay irreconcilable enmity, from this source, much oftener than we can ascribe these lamentable consequences to any great violations of the principles of morality.

Whenever, therefore, we feel inclined to deny what has just been advanced, let us previously reflect whether our motive for interference be such as will justify that interruption of general harmony which contradiction always endangers. Is the misrepresentation gross, is the mistake at once palpable and important? If so, a duty paramount to the laws of good-breeding compels us actively to support the cause of truth; but (even then) we should still recollect, that no cause is *well supported* without moderation and urbanity. There is no occasion for the loud scream of reprobation; a hint is more

forcible, if not to the offender, at least to the by-stander. If the culprit refuses to receive this admonition, and even maintains her own opinion or statement with pertinacity, it will be more advisable to decline the contest, than to enter on, what is quite inimical to the nature of social converse, a long angry argument. Discussions of important points may sometimes be pursued in company with improvement or pleasure; but then the weapons of controversy must be wielded by masters of the science, who possess real command of temper as well as information, who can *gracefully* submit to *defeat*, and who scorn to *pursue* a *victory* after it has been *acknowledged*. Such talents are too seldom found in unison, to induce me to rescind my affirmation, that contradiction and argument are the pests of conversation; and unfortunately the more insignificant the occa-

sion, the more irritating are the consequences.

Giving unpleasant answers has been already alluded to: bitter irony is another solecism of the rules of politeness. To say what you are certain will give unnecessary pain, is not only a breach in manners but in morals. If Wit be restrained by the fundamental laws of her own empire from lacerating by her keenness, shall the usurper Dulness be allowed to use her mallet, to do what the bright daughter of Fancy renounces her legitimacy by attempting! Rude sarcasms might always be corrected by the company before whom the offence is committed. If there were no *thoughtless* laughers, there would be no *offensive* jesters. The leaven of vanity operates in this instance, as it does in most of our petty faults. Solicitous of distinction, yet ignorant of worthy means to procure it, the splenetic dullard

resolves to be celebrated, though it be only as the *destroyer* of that comfort which he cannot *promote*. Banishment to Coventry would be a deserved and salutary punishment; nothing can sooner reclaim malignity than to show it its own insignificance. But, to undertake the execution of this sentence, requires more hardihood than generally accords with the female character.

An adept in the practice of christian candour knows that we must invariably conform to the precept of "thinking no evil." Among the minute but highly important ramifications of this extensive duty, we may rank all unpleasant constructions of the words of our associates; and, when they really will bear no other interpretation, endeavouring to show the speaker that we are desirous of understanding them in a favourable light. A good-humoured answer to a splenetic remark constitutes those

" soft words" which Solomon commends; and there are few tempers so truly diabolical but will yield, if not to the suavity, at least to the address of gentle management; I except passionate people, who, if they are generous (the usual concomitant of warmth), are always soonest vanquished, by showing them that the darts they throw about at *random* make *painful* wounds.

The precept of " in honour preferring one another," will teach us a habit extremely gratifying to all with whom we associate: I mean that of appearing interested in their affairs. This species of attention is especially due to those who are in affliction or perplexity. We cannot expect that people who are so circumstanced can enter into the ordinary style of conversation with ease and cheerfulness; and, it is probable, we have no other way of softening their calamities than by taking an interest

in their affairs. What, shall we ask, is so grateful as pity;—what so soothing as sympathetic attention? The veriest wretch that ever languished in calamity would turn his woe-worn face to catch the accents of commiseration. Consolation is certainly a most difficult office; we never can discharge it well, if we do not undertake it rather with a heart disposed to perform it as a duty, than with a mind prepared to enter upon it as a field wherein we may display our powers. The great evil that persecutes conversation, intrudes also into this part of social intercourse; I mean vanity. Though nothing is so galling to the excoriated heart as reproof, most comforters are apt to consider *censure* as the grand *specific* for woe. "Miserable comforters are ye all," said Job to the declaimers who crowded round him to tell him that his *sins deserved* chastisement. The sons and daughters of affliction oftener

find relief from self-exertion than from the trite arguments, or rousing stimulants, which are so injudiciously applied by those who yet pique themselves on a diligent attendance on the house of mourning. Among the requisites proper to enable us to discharge this duty as we ought, discretion and tenderness hold the preeminence. The festering ulcers of the wounded spirit should be cleansed with a light hand and feeling heart. Allow much for the petulance of affliction; do not assume the severe censor, and scrutinize every wayward expression; you will be oftener required to listen than to speak. Be patiently attentive to the tale of misery till the first pangs of grief subside, and exhausted feeling wears a momentary resemblance to apathy; you may then apply yourself to *extract* the thorn with some prospect of success. Gradually introduce other subjects; at first, such only will in-

terest as are analogous to the situation of the sufferer. If you conceive that the mind bends so much as to mistake murmuring for sensibility, in your conversation dwell on the virtue of fortitude, or rather recommend christian resignation. You may do this incidently, by introducing such examples as lady Rachel Russel, or miss Bowdler. The one showed that it was possible for the hopes of immortality to vanquish the *acute* sense of the most severe, uncommon, and repeated deprivations; while the other proved its capacity of triumphing over the most extreme tortures of bodily anguish. In both instances, the christian principle had to contend with great natural sensibility.

Advice is a duty analogous to consolation, and requires as much delicacy in the administering it, to render it beneficial; but as the right of giving it is circumscribed within narrow bounds, we will

here only enter a protest against those very busy people, who are troubled with such an overflow of wisdom, that they are always giving lectures on propriety, and correcting every thing which they suspect to be an error. Unless we are sanctioned by the ties of affinity, intimate friendship, or that accidental superiority which the dependant situation of the advised creates, we should seldom venture on the invidious task of a counsellor, unless by gentle hints or silent intimations of dissent; which duties we shall be required to perform as often as the interests of truth or morality are called in question. But it sometimes happens, that comparative strangers will ask our opinions on their conduct; this, however, is rarely done, except when they have made up their minds upon the subject, and wish to strengthen their resolution by these unfairly collected suffrages. On such an occasion, it is

wrong to sacrifice our integrity to insidious vanity. Silence is the wisest mode; but if we must speak, our opinion should be ingenuous, only couched in respectful language.

I have not yet touched upon the principal fault of conversation: I mean slander. When it proceeds from maliciousness, or when it is embellished with falsehood, it belongs to a species of vices that exceed the jurisdiction of minor morals. There is, however, a description of detraction known by the name of gossipping, which is the general pest of all rural associations, and seems quite an equivalent for that immoderate love of pleasure which contaminates a town life. What, may we ask, is that perverted industry which is ever busied in the *minute* concerns of our neighbour, but restless indolence? Too dissipated to be quiet, too weak to be self-amused, we rustics are compelled to

go out of ourselves in search of some pungent stimulant to drug the vapid cup of life. The misadventures of all around them are an exquisite treat to spirits of this cast; their vital stream would inevitably stagnate, did it not receive some impetus from a *faux-pas* or an elopement. Had I a mind to jingle upon words, I could say that they would be *ruined* without *bankruptcies*, and *miserable* without *misfortunes*; a typhus in your family cures them of a nervous intermittent, and a breach in your domestic felicity creates amusement for half your acquaintance. In the gloomy month of November, when most people are shut up in their own castles, or during any extraordinary stagnation of news, what is to become of the unfortunate beings who subsist upon report? Sooner than be quite famished, they must provide themselves with some improper aliment; and when they can

no longer *see* what their neighbours are doing, they may *surmise* what they say or think; and it is possible, through Mrs. Nokes, aided by the discoveries of Miss Styles, strengthened by the hints of Mr. Richard Roe, confirmed by a plentiful share of Abigail testimony, we may find out that they have been talking about us while sitting round their sullen sea-coal fire. How gloriously does our indignation rise at this discovery! In the language of Vapid, in the Dramatist, "Here's a field! here's a situation! what an opening! talk about *us?*—Infamous." Memorandum: Is it not extraordinary, that conscience never tells us that our grand resource during this dreary season has been talking about *them?* But the conscience of a thorough paced gossip is not the most just emblem of susceptibility.

Selfishness is certainly the motive for encouraging this busy tattling humour;

yet if we consulted our own true interests, we should scarcely find a companion more inimical to peace than this general inquisitiveness, and restless intrusion into the thoughts and affairs of our neighbours. In vain shall we hope to quench our appetite for this indulgence, when we once allow it to intrude upon our mind; it is irresistible; and there is no alternative between exterminating the inclination and enduring the thirst of Tantalus. At first, it introduces itself under the habit of playfulness, and attempts no more than a harmless laugh at the foibles which it discovers; but unless we possess great good-temper, and live in a soil remarkably fertile in ridiculous solecisms, increase of appetite soon impels us to asperity; or, possibly, some remark on Mrs. Heaviside's Arcadian *drapery* is so very good, that we cannot keep it within due bounds; and thus being circulated beyond our own

immediate sphere, it reaches the ears of the lady herself, who, in a spirit of vindictive sarcasm, returns the retort uncourteous upon our *wig*. When affairs arrive at this state, nothing is wanting but a go-between (of which commodity there is always plenty in every gossiping neighbourhood,) to blow up these embers into a tremendous blaze. It is singular, that people often declaim against the petty causes which set empires at variance, without having the candour to recollect, that it is trivial events operating on the same stormy passions of individuals, which produce all the hatred and ill-will that disturb the serenity of private life.

The opposite offence to censoriousness is flattery. The lower we descend for our examples of this vice, the more disgusting is its appearance. The smooth courtliness of polished manners leads people of rank to overdrug the po-

tion of civility; but it is by graceful attentions, and elegant allusions, that they recommend the charmed cup to your fascinated taste. When the mixture is prepared less scientifically, the "soft insinuating oil" is apt to be too apparently swimming on the surface; inferior cooks are still more inclined to "make the gruel thick and slab," till, in the hands of your chamber maid, it becomes such a hodge podge as would nauseate any but the craving appetite of insatiable vanity. Is it not strange, that flattery in its grossest state proves palatable even to the refined taste of superior intelligence? The Muse records this foible of one of her favourite sons *:

"Of praise a mere glutton, he swallow'd what came,
"And the puff of a dunce he mistook it for fame;
"Till his relish grown callous almost to disease,
"Who pepper'd the highest was surest to please."

* Garrick. See Goldsmith's poem of Retaliation.

It *still* sometimes happens, that a young woman, disgusted with the predominant mode of behaviour, and wishing to be thought very civil, turns parasite, or at least never attains independence of character. This betrays a lamentable want of dignity of mind; but the error is generally confined to the unhappy department of humble cousins, and may therefore rather be styled a misfortune than a vice. The general fault of the present times is *inattention*, and not *excess* of civility. The modern belle not only has an opinion, but takes care to maintain it at the expence of the comforts of others.

This leads me to speak of accommodation, a duty which certainly holds a chief rank among the claims of society, and which, as I have mingled the subjects of conversation and good neighbourhood, it is proper that we should here discuss. The course of human af-

fairs, or rather our relative situation, and the intervention of other duties, so limit the active exertions of benevolence, that many cannot, except in wish and purpose, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and relieve the oppressed. Is benevolence then to languish like a smothered fire? No; she will shed her cherishing warmth over all the common offices of life; she will comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, and restrain the presumptuous; or (to adapt her duties to our present theme) she will, by banishing all immoderate desire of self-enjoyment, direct her attention to the comforts, conveniencies, inclinations, and claims of others. She will restrain those appetites which interfere with what she conceives to be a primary consideration; and, viewing herself as she really is, but as one little emmet in a mole-hill, she will see that it is desirable, that the welfare of many should be preferred to her caprices,

and not that her whims should subjugate the well-being of others. She will not only "love a sister's praise, or hear with unwounded ear sighs for a daughter," but she will never attempt to spoil a ball to which she has not been invited, nor send excuses to an old friend if she can spend a more pleasant evening. In her engagements, she will consider what is right and proper; in her manner of spending her time, what is useful and necessary; and—suffer me to suggest an observation of high concernment to those who walk in the distinguished paths of life,—she will inquire how, by a proper arrangement of those actions which are to herself *immaterial*, she can promote the *comfort* and *convenience* of those who depend upon her will for their enjoyment. Her expences will be regulated by similar motives; self will not be the Aaron's serpent to swallow up every

other item; charity and liberality will put in their claims at the first division, and not wait (as they are often compelled to do) to pick up the casual crumbs of extravagance. If all other means of showing her regard to her fellow-creatures are withheld, she will at least regulate her speech by proper maxims; she will give to every one their due importance; and, by ingenuously aiming at performing her own duty, she will acquire that eminence for which ostentation wearies itself in vain.

It may seem extraordinary, to a mind deeply impressed with the majesty and immensity of the Almighty, that in the revelation which he has made to mankind, his holy Spirit should have condescended to dictate rules applicable to the ordinary habits and offices of society; or, in other words, that the Gospel should regulate *manners*. Yet most un-

questionably this is the case; and whoever fully imbibes the spirit of our religion, acquires the *principles* on which true politeness is founded. I mean, humility and benevolence. But to descend from general observation; where shall we find precepts more fitted to promote domestic happiness, and social enjoyment, than the following comprehensive rules? "Blessed are "the Peacemakers; for they shall be "called the children of God. Be kind- "ly affectioned one to another, in ho- "nour preferring one another. Re- "compence to no man evil for evil. "If it be possible, as much as lieth "in you, live peaceably with all men. "When thou art bidden to a feast, sit "not down in the highest room, lest a "more honourable man than thou be "bidden, and he that bade thee and him "come and say unto thee, 'Give this man "place;' and thou begin with shame to

" take the lowest room. But when
" thou art bidden, go and sit down in
" the lowest room, that when he that
" bade thee cometh, he may say unto
" thee, ' Friend, go up higher;' then
" shalt thou have worship in the pre-
" sence of them that sit at meat with
" thee. For whoever exalteth himself
" shall be abased, and he that humbleth
" himself shall be exalted. Be of the
" same mind one toward another; mind
" not high things, condescend to men
" of low estate; let love be without
" dissimulation; be pitiful (that is,
" tender or compassionate), be courte-
" ous. Be not wise in your own con-
" ceits. Judge not one another. Be
" not slothful in business; provide
" things honest in the sight of all men.
" Use hospitality without grudging.
" He that will not work neither let
" him eat. Let your conversation be
" without covetousness. Be content

" with such things as ye have."—If to this brief system of social duty we add the numerous reprehensions of idlers, of tattling wandering busy-bodies, and negligent parents who do not provide for their own house, we shall discover a compendium of morals which, if strictly obeyed, would render every private society the seat of happiness and delight. For though this world, in its physical constitution, exhibits so many marks of ruined magnificence, and punitory inflictions, as justify the *verity* of sacred testimony, and prove it to have participated in the *chastisements* of its *offending* master, it is not the inclemency of the seasons, the disappointments of fortune, external calamity, nor even disease and death, that make our existence burthensome; but it is irregular humours, inordinate desires, and criminal propensities, either in ourselves or in those

with whom we are most nearly connected, that make us turn from the cup of God's bounty with distaste, and view the fair face of nature with despair.

Suppose a family, each individual of which diligently studies to do what they know to be right. Let all of them consider and appreciate the claims of others, before they consult their own inclinations; and let them steadily resolve to subdue caprice, restlessness, and vanity. Who is there that can picture to his mind the harmony, tranquillity, tenderness, and joy of such a party, without wishing to pitch his tabernacle among them? We will only require, that hopeless anguish and penury should be banished; and though infirmity should occasionally want our aid, or frugality deny us all but common comforts, the bower of Acrasia, or the baths of Capreæ, will be esteemed but as the tents of "Kedar and Me-

sech" to a mind capable of estimating and enjoying true felicity.

We have now travelled over the positive duties which we owe to society in general; but before we enter on those important ties which spring from our sexual relations, let us call to mind a peculiar obligation, the bond of choice or habit; I mean, friendship.

Men have often disputed the capacity of women for this tender and amiable connexion; they have ascribed to us too *much* irritability, and too *little* judgment and consistency, to complete the character of a faithful and valuable friend. Every man who possesses a good wife, has it in his power to refute this sophism; for no wife can really be a good one, without being in every sense, and every possible extension of the word, the *friend* of her husband. But it is argued, that this connexion is strengthened by

ties, and distinguished by relative obligations, that cannot subsist between two females; and therefore that it is no way analogous to the subject we are now considering. A wife knows that she must *submit* to, and cannot *forsake*, her husband. A husband also knows that he must defend and provide for his wife. A leading and a subordinate character, bound by an indissoluble bond, afford no parallel for a connexion founded on equality, and capable of being rescinded. I acknowledge the latter dissimilarity; and confess, that in the marriage state, the inviolability of the engagement often acts as a prudential restraint upon vice and folly; but it is an erroneous conclusion, to suppose that the most promising friendships are founded upon equality. The most beneficial engagements of this kind admit dissimilarity of circumstances.

Total opposition of character is, I grant incompatible with affection; but when a woman chooses her friend wisely, she will select one who may supply her own deficiencies either in age, understanding, discretion, knowledge, temper, or manners. If she look out for the echo of her own defects, she merely retains a parasite. It is an injudicious selection, rather than a want of capability for lasting attachments, that has brought female friendship into disrepute. Yet I cannot see that the intimacies of girls, who are alike votaries of the idol admiration, deserve severer censure, than the gregarious habits of the worshippers of Bacchus or Belial. Every boon companion and every dissipated rake possesses a *dear friend:* are these engagements better founded, or likely to be more stable, than the keen sensibilities of romantic

nymphs, or the violent intimacies of coquets?

But recrimination is not exculpation: we are always told, that supposing celibacy may afford instances of two spinsters playing daily at piquet when tabbies, who played at ball when girls, marriage is *constantly* the grave of female friendship. I am ready to admit, that our dependent state and circumscribed abilities render us less competent to the active duties of this obligation than man, who possesses the power as well as the will of obeying the dictates of his heart. It is most certain, that the authority which the husband exercises over the actions of his wife, often compels her to sacrifice less consecrated attachments. Sometimes the matrimonial tie removes her to a distance that will not permit her to cherish an intimacy with her with whom she once flourished " like twin roses on one

stalk;" and still more frequently, the occupations and duties incident to her new connexion, insensibly and undesignedly divert her from attending to claims which necessity and reason alike assure her are of secondary obligation. The interests, habits, and opinions of the family into which she is adopted, are rarely congenial with those of the society from which she is withdrawn. Her exertions to serve an old friend must be limited by the permission of her husband, and by what she owes to his interests and to those of her children. I am urging so many circumstances against the permanence of friendship in married women, that you will say it is more to be wondered at that it ever continues, than that it is often obliterated. Yet surely, granting this to be the case, men have no cause to reproach us with versatility, for yielding to the primæval obligations of

our being; nor should we sink in their estimation, for that submission to their humours, and devotedness to their interests, which are at once *obligatory* and *unavoidable.* But a suspension of the expressions or offices of friendship, when it proceeds from these causes, does not imply an alienation of heart; declining a correspondence, or interrupting an intimacy, is not relinquishing a friend. Circumstances may and often do arise, which admit of regathering the *unravelled* but not *broken* clue of love; which should never be separated, except from discovering the baseness or unseemliness of its texture. If the friends of our youth are so disjoined from us by intervening connexions, that they cannot conduce to the comfort or convenience of our maturer years, they are (if intrinsically valuable) an excellent commodity to lay by upon the shelf. They

may prove the cordial restorative of broken spirits, the *sole* enlivener of life's long wintery eve, when the possessions which prudence taught us to prefer have all been taken from us, and the solitary mind wants vigour to form new acquaintance, powers to create attachments, and animation to enjoy any thing which use has not rendered palatable, or demonstrated to be salutary.

We will not, therefore, erase friendship from the catalogue of feminine connexions; but assign its place to the extremes of early and declining life, in which its influence may be most largely exerted. Not that we are authorized entirely to banish it from that busy part of our existence which is generally occupied by the conjugal engagement; we only suppose it as acting during that period in a circumscribed and subordinate station. Since I have acknowledged

myself to be inclined to plead against the justice of absolutely passive obedience in a wife, I will here put in a retainer for friendship, as being a kind of claimant that has a right to lift up her voice against the absolute authority of a husband, I plead not for dangerous, indiscreet, or unsuitable attachments, I am an avowed enemy to exclusive intimacies and unlimited confidence, especially among married women. I bar all neglect of family cares, for the sake of imparting family *histories* to a dear correspondent; and all professions, or attentions, that can introduce the green-eyed monster, jealousy, into a bosom which, feeling its right to undivided rule, will neither endure a brother nor a sister near the throne. All these paraphernalia of affection I renounce; and every sensible woman, who values her own happiness, or her own character, will re-

nounce it too. But has she a discreet and faithful friend, who, though she sincerely loves her, is content to retain only this limited portion of her heart, nay, who has too much principle to think that she *ought* to possess more; does this friend conduct herself with obliging attention to the ruling power; does she avoid making court to either party by unworthy means; does she alike endeavour to avoid officiousness and inattention; does she not only conceal the secrets of the family, but, I may say, shut her eyes upon such part of its private arcana as she is not desired to inspect, and refuse to *know* what should not be *told*;—such a friend is an inestimable treasure, and we ought to feel its value. I hope it may be justly affirmed, that few men would wish to deprive their wives of such an associate. Should caprice, however, so cloud their judgments, I

conceive that every humble entreaty, every temperate remonstrance, which female eloquence can suggest, should deprecate the privation; to which, if hard necessity compels, female sensibility must with *slow* reluctance *painfully* submit.

In order to render friendship either a permanent or a happy tie, it seems necessary that the choice should be made with great caution; and yet accident, or local situation, generally determines intimacies which afterwards ripen into sincere attachments. Moralists always load young women with directions respecting the qualities that they should prefer in their friends; forgetting that this advice presupposes a ripeness of discernment, which is incompatible with the age that they address. There is no doubt that good sense, good temper, discretion, &c. are preferable to their opposite bad properties; but how is a young girl to discriminate between these

and their *counterfeits*, or to disjoin them from the various qualities by which they are obscured or counteracted? It is only by long observation that we can estimate the real disposition and value of our closset intimates. General character, especially of very young people, is extremely deceitful; their very limited sphere of action, and the restraint imposed upon their behaviour, leave ample room for conjecture; and as the partial reports of friends or the representations of enemies prevail, their companions believe them to be agreeable or horrid creatures, excessively good-humoured or monstrously reserved.

For these and similar reasons, it has been doubted, whether youth be really the season in which this precious plant should be introduced into the heart. It is to be apprehended, that if it be not cultivated in early life, it will never take root. What we then want in discrimination, we

possess in energy; and though our judgments are then weak, our candour, our sincerity, and desire to please, are most strong. Besides, friendship does not presuppose us other than imperfect beings; it implies mutual errors and mutual wants, by the fundamental laws of its empire. Let two well-educated young women, possessing common sense, and having no particular bad tendency, nor too much enthusiasm, entertain a sincere affection for each other, and there is a great chance that it will mutually render them more amiable. The disgrace that is thrown upon early friendships proceeds from our confusing the properties of *intimacy* and *attachment*. Circumstances will throw young people in each other's way who are totally indifferent to, or even dislike each other. What never existed cannot be annihilated.

Though I should not think favourably

of a young woman's heart, who has attained the age of puberty without discovering a peculiar attachment to some favourite companion; I acknowledge, that romance and extravagance are so apt to intermingle with these connexions, that they are never entirely safe, unless subjected to the superintendance of more experienced heads, who will endeavour to repress enthusiasm, and to correct folly. As a fundamental rule, it may be premised that no good girl will form a friendship which is *disapproved* by the seniors of both houses, nor will she permit the intercourse of even a sanctioned attachment to assume a *clandestine* aspect. The endearing and improving bond never so truly executes its original purpose, as when a mother so far disarms herself of restraint and severity as to become the chosen companion of her daughters, who on their part strengthen obedience by confidence and

esteem. A well-disposed ingenuous girl, conversing with an intelligent mother, possesses all the advantages of indisputable sincerity and tenderness. Here there is no danger that trust will be too implicit, or that affection will become too passionate. Rivalship cannot exist in these circumstances; advice will never be invidious; and though reproof may sometimes mistake its object, it must always design the good of the advised. A judicious friend, in whom there is a similar disparity of years, may in some cases act as a *substitute* for a maternal adviser.

But as sameness of character is the result of confined intercourse, and as we do not wish to see the "sear and yellow leaf" predominate among the tender verdure of spring, it is desirable that young women should have connexions of their own age. Every judicious mother will certainly aim at securing the confidence of

her daughter, and acting as her counsellor and guide, if not as her preferred companion. By this happy influence, she may hope to save her from one of the greatest misfortunes that can befal young spinsters; I mean, an *indiscreet* friend. I am not merely alluding to the difficulties in which such a character will involve them, or the disgrace to which they may be exposed by her levity —for a good understanding and good behaviour would in time obliterate or prevent these bad consequences—but I speak of the irremediable warp that she may communicate to their dispositions; and this even by what, if separately considered, are valuable properties; for she may confirm all their bad inclinations, and foster all their ill-humours, even by her sincerity and affection. That our friend is our other self, is religiously believed by all juvenile associates; and by a misapplication of this rule the hatreds,

disgusts, prejudices, and particularities of *their very dear friends* become their *own;* not to be corrected and subdued, but cherished and vindicated. This violent adhesion to each other is seen in full force in boarding schools; where every girl has her enemy and her partisan; and right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are considered more as they affect "dear souls" and "odious creatures," than on account of their inherent properties. But this deifying and anathematizing spirit is not confined to fifteen; too many women are apt to confound the duties of friend and parasite, and even to suppose that peculiarity of attachment is somehow inconsistent with universal good-will, or else that strong affection never subsists but when it is founded on imaginary perfection. Surely, since the faults of our dear connexions give us most pain, our perception of them must be most acute, and our de-

sire to counteract or eradicate them most lively. Reproof and advice are the most sacred and the most frequent duties of friendship. Happy the woman who finds her dearest associate capable of tempering the healthful draught of admonition with kindness and delicacy; but more happy is she who has sufficient greatness of soul (which is synonymous with true humility) to accept it in its most unsavoury form, even if it should be presented by the invidious hand of ill-will or envy. To convert the unkind offices of malevolence into our own moral improvement, is the surest way of bringing good out of evil, and assisting to make "the wrath of man "work the righteousness of God."

But to return to those doughty champions who think even the *errors* of a friend too sacred to be censured; let us ask them, if they really serve the goddesses of their idolatry by entering into

their enmities, flattering their foibles, or forwarding their unworthy designs. It is a proof of affection, as well as of good sense and integrity, to refuse all such participation of interests with the utmost steadiness. We must, however, be careful to let our disjunction in these particulars appear like inflexible rectitude, not alienating indifference. If we cannot convince our friend of her errors, it is our duty to try to *conceal* them from others: I mean, if they are not notorious either in publicity or enormity: for truth possesses pre-eminent claims; and if our friend's garment be visibly bespattered with foul misdeeds, we must not endeavour to conceal them, at the hazard of staining the purity of our own. In the case of gross offences, those whom we cannot *reclaim* we must *abandon*. In other instances, when we meet with less debasing contaminations, we may find affection insensibly

diminished by those errors which annihilate esteem. In all circumstances, if we perceive our own integrity or discretion to be endangered, separation is advisable. This is only acknowledging that our judgement has been fallible; but to preserve an unworthy connexion, alike exposes our character, our principles, and our repose.

Let not, however, versality of inclination claim a privilege which can only be afforded to the higher claims of moral security. There is nothing so disgraceful as inconstancy; and an old friend, independent of the ties of gratitude and reciprocal obligation, may always claim this advantage over a new one, that you know both her excellencies and her faults; and what is known, may always be guarded against or depended upon. If you are in search of a faultless human being, you are engaged in a *hopeless* labour. Do you possess the great requisites of sincerity,

affection, and discretion, in your old friend; never change these staple commodities for the comparative gew-gaws of insinuating address, easy manners, nor even for an enlarged capacity of serving or pleasing you. Above all beware of sacrificing truth to the courtliness of a sycophant, or the subservience of a parasite. A woman of the world may afford you an agreeable evening, a flatterer may send you home in good humour; but a friend will act for you in all seasons and in all humours, and you will find her most useful in the storm of passion or the night of adversity.

I have used the word friend in the singular number; but as I by no means subscribe to the apophthegm of Gay, "that friendship is but a name, unless stinted to one," I here acknowledge that friendship is not *monarchical* in its constitution, like love; and therefore it has no right to be exposed to the inroads of *jealousy*, who

can have no just pretence to endeavour to erect it into a despotic empire. It does not, moreover, admit of that innumerous divisibility, which modern language sanctions, by transposing the names of friends and general acquaintance. In the largest sense of the word, we may call those friends in whose welfare we feel a lively interest, and who, we are persuaded, bear us a degree of regard which exceeds the bounds of general good-will. These seem to be probationary candidates for the more circumscribed meaning of the word, or to require nothing but local circumstances to be promoted to the honours of confidence and close intimacy. A discreet woman will not admit a numerous herd into these sacred precincts, especially into those of confidence. When we reveal our secret wishes, unbosom our private affairs, disclose our most undisguised thoughts, we put ourselves into the power of those

to whom we make these discoveries. This is oftener a proof of imbecility of mind than reality of attachment, and is seldom productive of any real advantage. At least, it should be reserved as the *last* pledge which full *security* intrusts to *tried regard;* I need not add, that it should be the most sacred. Apparent amiability has no pretence to require it; for it is due to principle, and not to manners. Those who attempt to begin a connexion by what they call the unrestrained intercourse of hearts, endeavour to erect an inverted pyramid, which must therefore inevitably fall.

Every moral precept, and every rule of good manners, is applicable to friendship; except that, as it sanctions greater freedom of behaviour, it also requires greater forbearance, than is necessary in general intercourse. I was once very rich in this treasure, and I could with pleasure dilate on this theme, which is

interwoven with all the *happiest* scenes of my life; but as a more copious description of the advantages that I possessed from having intelligent, zealous, and pleasant friends in early life, could neither amuse nor instruct my readers, I will tear myself from a topic which may lead to refractory regrets, repugnant to the decrees of Him "who gives and takes away." Let me rather turn my eyes on the prospects which still open on me: and your agreeable image reminds me that you have allowed me to call myself

Your truly affectionate friend.

LETTER XII.

On Celibacy, Love, and Marriage.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE extensive prospect that lately lay before us begins to contract into a narrow compass. A few relative duties and engagements are all that we have to consider before we enter upon the closing scene.

Previous to our discussing the topic of love and marriage, it may be necessary to inquire which is the most eligible for women, the single or the married state. The answer appears extremely obvious: certainly, the condition which the Almighty created us to occupy must be most conducive to our general happiness; that is to say, defining happiness as it always should

be interpreted, to signify the peace of conscience which results from well-doing. The corrupted inclinations and luxurious habits of mankind have, however, introduced such disorder and mutability into the universe, that we may be allowed to produce the confessedly uninspired determination of an apostle, in opposition to the general law of nature, and to acknowledge that a greater share of care, perplexity, pain, and sorrow, belongs to the matron than to the spinster: our inquiries must, therefore, be extended further, or our conclusions will be contradictory. Do the general laws of the Creator point at universal or individual happiness? Are not troubles and afflictions medicinal in this probationary state, as the purifiers of error and the nourishers of *christian* graces? Should we, therefore, estimate the blessedness of our lives by the degree of self-enjoyment that has fallen to our

lot; or by our usefulness to our fellow-creatures, and preparedness for a better existence? I hear my young friends exclaim, "Who could have courage to enter into the marriage state with such mournful views of futurity?" Alas! we can never form a right estimate of the *present*, or act upon proper motives, without extending our researches to what is *impending* and *unseen*.

It is a false and dangerous assertion, that single women must at best pass their lives in a dull mediocrity, removed indeed from lively griefs, but unacquainted with real enjoyment. Spinsters may be daughters, sisters, aunts, and friends, though they are not wives and mothers. Every one's experience can supply instances, wherein as much warmth of attachment and solicitude of attention have accompanied the fraternal, as ever hallowed the conjugal tie. How many helpless orphans have

found maternal tenderness supplied by the attachment of an aunt! How many parents have perceived the joyless portion of extreme old age turned into the downy pillow of repose, by the assiduous watchfulness of an unconnected daughter! Friendship, too, may reign in the heart of the single woman with unrivalled influence; and the absolute power that she possesses over her time and property gives an extensive range to her patriotic and charitable exertions. Ladies who are thus circumstanced are the properest patronesses of public undertakings; they are the natural *protectors* of the friendless, and the proprietors of those funds to which genius and indigence have a *right* to apply. Destitute of nearer ties, and unfettered by primary obligations, the whole world of benevolence affords a sphere for their actions, and the whole circle of science offers to

adorn their minds. It seems, indeed, difficult to pourtray a more enviable being, than a single woman possessed of affluence, who has passed through the tempest of youthful passions with untainted character, unvitiated temper, and unfettered heart. Let us allow her an active mind, sound judgment, good principles, and bodily activity; and we must rank her with those orders of superior beings who, though they "neither marry nor are given in marriage," are ever employed in executing the will and studying the works of God. But such a view of human nature is no more applicable to the *daughters* than to the *sons* of Adam. As in the latter, liberty is too often used for a cloak of licentiousness; so in the former, it is apt to be considered as a patent for folly. I do not however discover, that those votaries of Bacchus or

Venus who devote their fortune to gamesters, their time to sin, their bodies to disease, and their souls to Satan, have any right to ridicule the unconnected spinster for sacrificing to the graces of Bond-street, dividing her time between Faddle and Cassino, or even for swallowing the nostrums of Dr. Tattle, or being duped by the hypocrisy or fanaticism of a Cantwell. Uselessness is surely better than vice; egotism and credulity are not so culpable, nor so destructive, as blasphemy and licentiousness.

Since I am not only the *advocate* but also the *monitor* of single ladies, it is my duty to correct the errors which at best recrimination can only extenuate: I especially wish to correct their propensity to relate their early conquests. As the poor lovers whom they killed by their cruelty at eighteen, must be long ere this

not only "dead but rotten;" informing us that such a one expired under a frown, and that another fell into a mortal disease on their returning him an unopened letter, is but tantamount, in the scale of interesting conversation, to the list of apoplexies and consumptions in an old bill of mortality. If these *fair murderers* are agreeable and worthy, we can readily conceive that their singleness proceeded more from choice than compulsion; if they are destitute of these recommendations, we shall not credit the narrative of their conquests, unless the sheeted ghosts of sighing swains returned from the myrtle shades, and showed us their hearts transfixed with Cupid's arrows.

One word more of a sisterhood which I fear is not likely soon to diminish. Increased habits of luxury must lessen the chance of estimable offers; women, therefore, ought to accustom themselves

to those pursuits and occupations which will render them less dependent on the other sex, or enliven those lonely hours of retirement which frequently fall to the lot of poorly portioned celibacy. It is not only necessary that they should be economical, but that they should have a general knowledge of business and money transactions, at least sufficient to escape *imposition*. To this should be added, activity of mind, that they may avoid the ennui inseparable from idleness; and the diseases incident to a sedentary life. Improving study of all kinds is here a most valuable acquisition; and elegant accomplishments cannot be pursued with too much avidity, provided they do not injure the health. Great care should be taken to rebut the sarcasms of witlings and coquets; I do not say by a life of decorum—for I suppose myself addressing women of virtue—but by a style

of *manners* and *dress* suitable to their years. They should scorn all ridiculous affectation of youth, all "hoisting the flag of distress," as a witty author provokingly terms the pink ribband when it waves over the wrinkled brow of faded beauty. The observation extends to manners and amusements, as well as dress; and they should also be solicitous to bid farewell to the allowable levities of youth, with that easy good humour which shows that the resignation has not been painful. Let them but endeavour to be as useful to others as their limited means allow, and pursue every source of virtuous employment which their bounded sphere permits; and I can predict, that many a wife will have reason to envy the respectability and happiness of the old maid, and to regret that the silly ridicule attached to that name precipitated her into a ruinous and miserable con-

nexion, which strength of mind would have enabled her to reject with the becoming pride of self-dependence.

But as we unquestionably were created to be the wedded mates of man, it is only in some circumstances, and to some dispositions, that I would recommend celibacy as a state of choice; though I am persuaded that a well disposed mind may always submit to it without considering it as a misfortune. Extreme delicacy of health seems one motive for declining to enter the conjugal state; for, though passionate Love may promise that his purple torch shall *ever* burn beside the couch of the lovely sufferer, Hymen generally tells a very different story, and, carrying his flambeau to an evening party, vacates his seat in the sick lady's chamber in favour of her nurse and apothecary. It would indeed be imposing too much upon a benevolent

nevolent and upright heart; to confine it by engagements where we are unable to discharge our part of the contract; for infirmity is a clog, not a helpmate. Hereditary diseases are another obstacle; and in some cases I think they ought to be an insurmountable one comprising an extension of duty to many generations. Great susceptibility of temper is an objection less universally acknowledged, and which unfortunately predisposes the heart to enter upon a trial for which it has incapacitated it. The precept, that in the married state woman should never *expect* too much, nor feel too *keenly*, can never be too deeply impressed on the ardent mind of youth; and can they conform to this conclusion who cherish sensibility as a virtue, and, instead of studying the temper of others, suffer their own to acquire fastidiousness, under

the pretence of delicacy and refinement of feeling?

A disposition that can yield to the desires of others, not only without *apparent* reluctance, but without *enduring* pain; health, cheerfulness, activity, frugality, attention to family concerns, and a relish for common domestic pleasures, are the qualities which a young lady should endeavour to obtain who determines to become a wife. In a majority of instances, these will put happiness in her own power; in all, they will lighten the load of misery. What a fashionable education can do toward the attainment of these requisites, has been already considered. The generality of English girls are educated, if not for a Turkish Harem, at least for the court of imperial France. Should they not be apprised, that the utility of the objects on which they are taught to lay a primary stress,

is commonly annihilated and the moment their end is achieved? When the wild elephant's neck is once fast in the noose, the pursuer has no further occasion for the fascinating influence of drums and bells. But constant attention, and command of temper, will still be necessary, or he will never bend to the yoke and draw kindly.

I believe young ladies are not *now* apt to fall violently in love at first sight. Except a few tinder-hearted nymphs, who inhabit the woodland glades, our sex is become too mercenary, and too dissipated, to feel an *irresistible* penchant, till they have obtained a side glance at the swain's rent-roll. Or, should the lying gossip Fame have cheated them in this particular, their extensive acquaintance furnishes them with a number of Adonises, who can assist them to break the fictitious chain which

they mistook for gold; and thus like patterns at the dress-maker's, one beautiful figure effaces the impression that another had made. I shall not, therefore, here detain you with a long admonition against young ladies' falling in love. The thing is *just* possible among a set whom nobody knows, and therefore nobody cares for their absurdities. It is, indeed, upon *record*, that formerly love made terrible work with the female heart, from fourteen to seventeen; and as it is still supposed, that during this period the soft and pliant wax might receive not only a deep but a lasting impression, fashion has copied the edifices in which it immures female adolescence, from the strong fortresses where the royal race of Abyssinia are secluded from the world. On reconsidering all the masquerade habits which the gods of old assumed in their amours, I can

only think of two disguises in which Cupid could now gain admittance to a girl of fashion: he must either fold his wings into the stuffed jacket of a dancing-master, and twirl his bow and quiver into a kit; or dilate his tiny form into the magnitude of a drill-serjeant; as these are the only *priviledged* beings who are still allowed an opportunity of whispering a tender tale into the credulous ear of youth.

Moralists are as much inclined to prescribe rules for the *choice* of a husband, as of a friend. I am afraid that the very title they prefix to their admonitions is apt to mislead a young mind, which is thus led to expect a variety of offers, and a liberty of taking what it prefers. Perhaps a great beauty, or still more probably a great fortune, may have the power of selecting the best from many *cotemporary* offers; but lovers rarely

appear in groups, very seldom amount to plurality, and generally, like the fruit of the orange-tree, appear in succession, or perhaps fall off before they ripen. A man of honour, and I may add of delicacy, does not choose to enter upon a field which another has occupied, or to solicit a heart which he may suspect is pre-engaged. Rejection then, rather than selection, constitutes female prerogative in this important point. It seldom happens that a woman has the good fortune to attract the attentions of the man she would prefer; and often, when from a false hope of that kind she has refused an eligible offer, circumstances arise which prevail upon her to accept what presents a far less favourable prospect of happiness. "The world is not before us, where to choose;" we are not, we cannot be, the carvers of our own fortunes, any further than respects that

internal disposition which teaches us to view our affairs in the best light, and, since we cannot mend our lot, to bend our minds. Regret for what is lost, or restless desire of what is unattainable, does but foster murmuring discontent.

When a young woman contracts an attachment for a deserving object, who seems not to return her preference, her situation is most dangerous and pitiable. As the perverse (perhaps, in this instance, I should rather say independent) nature of man never appears more strongly, than in his determination to fly those who follow, and to follow those who fly; every enticement that a lovelorn lass holds out to catch the heart she wishes for, generally proves a *scarecrow* that terrifies the wayward animal; and as I do not wish her to have art enough to cover her advances in the *attractive* disguise of disdain, she must avoid

the god of her idolatry," as the most likely prelude to self-conquest. If circumstances will not permit her to do this without exciting suspicion that secret partiality is the motive, she must yet rouse all her mental strength, and make an heroical effort for self-conquest; which will be her only alternative with a life of despair. Nature certainly intended that man should sue and woman *coyly* yield. Few who have volunteered their affections ever became happy wives; we must never reckon on the stability of gratitude, when we put ourselves wholly in the power of the obliged party.

I have already stated, that it is needless to address polite readers on the absolute necessity of prudential considerations in marriage. But though the worship of Plutus seems to be the established religion of the age, there are a few dissenters still remaining, who fancy

that pure love will supply a good every-day dinner. This rash conclusion is, however, more the effect of ignorance, than of any real dereliction of principle; and proceeds from not knowing the *value* of money, and not from a Spartan *renunciation* of the comfort that it procures. For if we examine the manners of these tender devotees, we shall find that their wants are too numerous even for competence; and and that it is not penury, but affluence, which must supply what they call mere *necessary* expences. Suppose some lace-enveloped Lydia Languish, in the height of her paroxysm for poor Ensign Beverly, was compelled to assist the family-caterer in the routine of purchasing daily provisions. Let her investigate the demands of the tax-gatherer and coal-merchant, and even cast her eye over the items of soap, candles, and grocery. She will discover a great

many inelegant articles to which she never affixed either value or importance, that have operated as a constant drain upon the needful, and have really been so essential to her comfort that she could scarcely have existed without them. If she understand the rudiments of arithmetic, let her next employment be to subtract these essentials from the ensign's pay, and then let her estimate how much will remain to be the *food* of love.

But to leave such romantic extravagants to their certain cure, experience, permit me to assure every young woman who is inclined to under-rate the consideration of competence, that she is very unlikely to feel herself happy in a station of life *below* that which she filled in her single state. An income inadequate to our real (not our imaginary) wants, is a calamity of sufficient weight to overthrow the fairest fabric of happiness, and

to oppress the most amiable temper. When the pruning hand of necessary retrenchment cuts off comfort after comfort, when the wants of a rising family press upon parental tenderness, most wives have more to contend with than their *own* feelings. They may divert discontent, by cheerfully engaging in the more active share of family duty which prudence has taught them to practise; but how shall the poor gentleman (if he be also a man of leisure) pass the hours which society and amusement agreeably occupied, when poverty confines him to the domestic fire-side? Men bear this species of trial infinitely worse than women; and when a young lady marries a man whose fortune will but *just* cover *unavoidable* expences, she should consider whether her fortitude be equal to the multipled misery that she must endure from the reverberating pressure of

the wants and woes of those who are nearest to her heart, and whose privations must pain her more than her own.

What are called very splendid alliances, are as little likely to produce comfort and content, as the imprudent connexions that we have just considered. In the preceding remarks, I did not mean to interdict a connexion which admits of the brightening prospects of successful industry, but was supposing a state in which industry could not act (and many who write gentlemen are in this painful and humiliating predicament). So with respect to disparity of fortune, I do not mean to estimate it by mere weight of metal, when other considerations are equal. The well-portioned heiress *ought* to enrich the dependant younger brother; and the wealthy heir *should* select for his consort the unportioned daughter of a respectable family. It is my wish

to warn young women from aiming at conquest, on the score of their personal attractions, to which neither their birth, connexions, education, nor situation entitle them to aspire. If the erratic pursuers of happiness would candidly state their discoveries, we should probably accede to the proposition, that every one is happiest in the state of life to which they have been accustomed. It is certainly sufficient to discourage this species of fair adventurers, that not one in a hundred succeeds in her efforts; but the prospect becomes still more disheartening if we also discover that few of these fortunate candidates are *happy*. A young woman of humble connexions and inferior accomplishments, who is engrafted into an honourable stock, will experience mortifications from the family to which she is allied, that can only be parried by effrontery or stupidity. She

must continually feel the restraints and the difficulties of her situation; she will sink under the fatigues of fashionable dissipation, and will find her mind fretted by fastidious refinements, of which the happy simplicity of inartificial manners can form no conception. She will also be conscious of improprieties, and omissions which nothing but an early initiation into high life would have taught her to avoid; and even the glittering equipage, which so forcibly struck her youthful fancy, will seem but a painful conveyance, if it *pass* by the amusement that she could have *enjoyed*, to *set* her down at what she *detests*. In fine, she will discover that merit cannot successfully combat the minute scrutiny of envy, especially when its prying glances are sharpened by unexpected prosperity; and that luxurious enjoyments can sooner pall the taste, than mortifications can

render the heart callous. I have not taken into this view, the more than probable accumulation of uneasiness which may wring the heart, at that period when the fond romantic lover changes into the cool reflecting husband. Richardson's Pamela is as absurd in its colourings of high life, as in its portrait of the reformation of a libertine.

Let not a young woman, then, seek for conjugal happiness in a station of life that is very dissimilar to her own; or in her own rank, without a competent provision to maintain those decencies of appearance which are its *proper* appendages. If she possess delicacy of character (I should here use stronger terms), if she value her own temporal or eternal interests, or that of the unborn, by the sacred names of mother and christian let me conjure her to *shrink* from the advances of a *known* libertine;

or, if she cannot avoid, let her steadily refuse his offers; they comprise such an accumulation of misery, as no pecuniary advantages can counterbalance. Let not youthful innocence sell itself to disease, impurity, and remorse; nor pledge her hand where, though she must obey, she can neither love nor honour. All gross moral errors are in the same strong sense *insuperable* objections; and surely women never would knowingly venture on such partners, but from an expectation of their being able to *reclaim* them. Alas! how much does youthful vanity here overrate female power! The stubborn clay of man is never pliant but in early life; the storms of contention, and the pressure of business, give it an impenetrability which, however suited to the rude buffets that it is designed to endure, prevent its being made malleable by the soft strokes of feminine influence.

Whatever itself "wills to do, seems," in its own estimation, "wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best." If we attempt to remodel the lords of the creation, we must begin before they have discarded that *emblem* of subjection, a petticoat.

Infidelity is frequently coupled with licentious conduct; but sometimes it doffs its gross associate, and affects the dignity of moral virtue. The woman who regards her eternal interests, and those of her future offspring, will tremble at submitting to the superintendance of a man whose dark and cheerless mind is unillumined by visions of a better world. Even if she had *good* grounds to rely on the virtue, tenderness, and generosity of such a partner (which I greatly doubt); even if she be previously assured that he will never seek to unsettle her faith, to restrain her devout exercises, or to interfere with the religious education of

his children; even if she know that he always will pay an *outward* respect to faith and piety, and ostensibly comply with its forms; though assured that no word will ever escape him, which shall betray his secret contempt and incredulity (what impossibilities am I now admitting!); if her fears are lulled, can her affection sleep? can she be happy, while she views in her kind and faithful partner, her bosom-friend, the father of her children, the source of all her earthly happiness, a *rebel* to his God, the *self-devoted* son of perdition, from whom, after death, she must hope to be eternally disjoined, and to whom she must wish annihilation as a blessing? The text, that "the believing wife sanctifies the unbelieving husband," has no reference to the case that we are considering, but to the early situation of Christian converts, when baptism did not dissolve the bonds either

of marriage or servitude, but the new members of the Christian church continued to discharge the obligations which they had contracted in their Gentile state, and this with additional earnestness, as a proof of their obedience to their heavenly Master. When we thus pervert scripture, to strengthen the temptations of avarice, ambition, sensual attachment, or from any other sinister motive, we imitate the conduct of the Prince of Darkness, who is never so dangerous to our souls as when he wields "the sword of the spirit, even the word of God." Surely it is far better that "the rose should wither on the virgin thorn," than that its tender leaves should be defiled, and excoriated, by being bound up with the filthy briers of vice or infidelity.

Next to these dreadful associates, let the candidate for the wreath of co-

nubial happiness steadily reject the offerings of *insuperable* folly. There is a strangely erroneous jumble of ideas respecting a supposed combination of docility, good-nature, and weakness of intellect, in the minds of some people, who are deplorably ignorant of life and manners. Folly is always selfish and obstinate; and I take these to be the standard compositions of *ill-nature*, not of *amiability*. Can narrowness of intellect be capable of those enlarged and disinterested views which produce good-will to all mankind, which refine the tender attentions of love, and invigorate the indelible impressions of friendship? Can the fool forget his own dear self so far as to be truly benevolent; can he learn self-denial; can he be convinced of his own infirmities, and set about reforming them? If you answer in the affirmative, you prove him not to be a fool.

I would advise a young woman never to select a man whom she discovers to be very deficient in the article of judgment; not even if she have reason to form a high opinion of her own, and to believe that her future husband will always regard it with lover-like preference; a contingency which is extremely *improbable*. The original design of marriage (mutual help and assistance) is defeated; and an inversion in the relative situation of the sexes is always attended by a degree of ridicule and absurdity, which an ingenuous and delicate mind must strongly feel. Women, in this instance, seem a little treacherous to their own cause. I will not pretend to state how it happens to be so; much less will I justify the proceeding; but most unquestionably that very respectable (though, I fear, not numerous) body of men, the Jerrys, lead a life some-

thing like that of a flying-fish, who when they are hunted out of their own natural element are pecked at by every petty wren that skims the air. We certainly ought to take these martyrs to our renown under our *protection*, and, by bringing them forward on all occasions as the only *true heroes*, show the refractory monsters who rebel against us what they *ought* to be. Suppose I were to attempt their eulogium: the theme is certainly *new*, and capable of considerable ornament. History whispers that it might be embellished with a few great names; and private anecdotes would furnish me with some eminent *living* ornaments of the society. I may reserve this for one of my future labours, in which I shall endeavour to appreciate merit by the most rigid rule of right; and as the more perfect the slavery, the more heroical the captive must

be deemed, I shall ascribe the first station to those *worthies* who, rejecting the silken chains of Hymen, contentedly endure the iron shackles of illicit love. But having just caught myself in the act of laughing at the idea of a laurelled son of Mars or Themis crouching at the painted shrine of a varnished Venus, who has just put on her wig and rouge to twirl the lash of discipline over the uxorious fool who feeds her avarice with *unacknowledged* favours, I am too conscientious an advocate to undertake a cause which I find I should betray. Men of this cast are generally the prey of artful women, who, whether as wives or mistresses, contrive to manage the imbecility that they despise. Some men, indeed, are classed by their friends in this order, though they really belong to a much superior rank; I mean men of real worth, and sound

minds, who endure female caprice from conscientious motives, and bear the cross rather than expose their families to the miseries of contention. I think our feelings cannot be more painfully roused, than when we see a man of merit thus circumstanced. A wife unjustly degraded below her proper station does not excite a tenth part of such strong sympathy and indignant interference. Is not this an argument in favour of the original institution of Providence, respecting the subservience of our sex? Though I stoutly deny, that this injunction originated in our natural inferiority, I believe it to be so expedient to the welfare and happiness of both parties, that I never would advise you, my dear Miss M——, to marry a man with a *promising* degree of obsequiousness in his aspect, unless you perceive that he has good sense enough to cover

the gossamer manacles which you may entwine around him with such an impervious coat of seeming *pertinacity*, that no one but yourself can tell that he actually wears them.

But since a young woman may have some objections to absolute slavery, even after she has lowered her mind to the just standard of wife-like obedience, it may not be unuseful to repeat a hint which a favourite author (perhaps incautiously) gave the ladies in his "Triumphs of Temper;" I allude to the domestic *toryism* of that staunch *whig* sir Gilbert. History and experience bear equal testimony to the just colouring of that character; for, from the antient Spartan, to that great volcano of patriotism Jack Wilkes, the greatest sticklers for public freedom have been the veriest domestic bashaws. I do not mean to create an alarm which must condemn the

the Whig Club to celibacy, I only remind those female archers who take aim at such "bold sons of air and fire," that in their precincts *freedom* is always considered to be of the masculine gender; and for my thus endeavouring to secure these gentlemen from all possibility of being brought under petticoat government (an event which is to them as horrible as the revival of the doctrine of passive obedience), I expect to be toasted at their next meeting, under the title of the "liberal-minded opponent of domestic emancipation."

Women are generally accused of being partial to exterior advantages, especially to wit, pleasantry, and what is called *airiness* of conversation. In this case, we certainly hazard our respectability and our happiness. If a man of plain sense rarely attends to the advantages of address, and seldom takes the

lead in conversation; neither does he, on the other hand, attach value to general admiration. With a husband of this description, we may not excite the envy of our unmarried friends; the fluency of our partner's conversation, the vivacity and brilliancy of his remarks, or the elegance of his deportment, may pass unnoticed; but our *fire-sides* have a chance of being *comfortable*, because it is most likely he will *there* condescend, or even wish, to be entertained by *us*. And as the consciousness of being less formed to shine in society, is sure to create domestic habits; so those who are not spoiled by an excess of praise are always grateful to those who regard them with preference. The blandishments of the gay and graceful lover are still more evanescent than the beauty of his mistress; and not even the renovating cauldron of Medea could renew their

pristine vigour. The more precious they were to our hearts, the more shall we feel the vacuum which their absence makes. Conjugal felicity cannot live upon public admiration; it is too meagre food. Male coquets are most frequently married men, who are never out of humour, (or, as they often call it, *nervous*,) but in that circumscribed circle from which they *cannot* be banished for being disagreeable. On such men, the charms of wit, information, and sprightliness in a wife, are lost, or perhaps they may induce him to hate her as a rival. His idea of a good companion implies a being who will admire his talents, and laugh at his bons mots, or one who will be the patient butt of his raillery, or a prowling jackall to collect him new anecdotes. The wife of a coxcomb (and surely the man who piques himself upon ostensible holiday

agreeableness is a coxcomb) must content herself with being an *echo* to a Narcissus.

I shall say little to that portion of my sex with whom a handsome person, a well-made coat, or any other eye-trap which whim or fashion has sanctioned, constitutes a dear adorable, preferable to every solid advantage and every internal excellence which papa and mamma may have discovered in some good quiz, who dances ill and employs a bad tailor. Such enchanted lasses are out of the precincts of reason; and I neither expect my pen to be possessed of the powers of a talisman, nor my voice to have the potency of the lyre of Orpheus. I must, therefore, leave them in the magical regions to which they have wandered.

I enter my solemn caveat against every thing that can be construed into an involuntary sacrifice; and if I will not allow rank, wit, or beauty, to lead their besot-

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ted captive to the altar, I positively prohibit wealth from binding its dejected victim in an indissoluble bond. When a young woman consents to sell herself to a rich Camacho*, from whom (instead of a decided preference) she revolts with disgust, she certainly becomes a legal prostitute. This title is not, however, due to all who, in their matrimonial sketches, place love *somewhat* in the back ground. If esteem constitute the principal figure, and if no disguised predilection for another *lurk* in the corner, I can conceive not only a good but a happy wife, in the shape of one who at first listened to a proposal of marriage through a hope of escaping from poverty and dependance, through the desire of raising a distressed family, or even through a wish of escaping from the inconveniences attached to a limited fortune.

* See Don Quixote.

But a young woman who connects herself with a man much her senior, or one who labours under some remarkable personal disadvantages, should possess a superior share of discretion and gratitude, and should previously determine to be the *partner* of his calamities, not the *spender* of his fortune. The habits of the present age so much diminish the chance of finding, among the many girls who would sell themselves to riches, one who would faithfully discharge the duties of the nurse, the friend, and the companion of infirmity, that it darkens the prospects of all uxorious old bachelors, whose passion for a young wife has not vanquished their dislike of having their morning slumbers disturbed by the clamour of their own footmen returning with their lady from a fashionable party, or being crammed into some obscure corner, with other obsolete lumber, whenever their lovely bride

chooses to be "at home to every body but themselves." As times now go, the dotard of threescore must think himself happy to be converted into *nobody*; a more *marked* distinction is so probable, that it seems to be his wisest way to betake himself to the quietus of his *arm-chair* and flannel gown, instead of crowning his brow with Hymen's thorny roses.

Long-deferred attachments, even when they are at last crowned with fruition, often produce little more than a happy honey-moon. The reason is, that romantic ideas take strong possession of the mind, while hope and fear alternately act upon so susceptible a passion as love. It is most certain, that difficulties and impediments rarely fail to *deepen* the impression which they are expected to eradicate; and when we feel dissatisfied with our present lot, we always dress up the unseen future in most false and flattering colours. A young

woman firmly attached to a man, to whom she sees little chance of being united, instead of investigating those defects which might reconcile her to the probable separation, generally adorns her idol in the robe of perfection. His steady fidelity to her covers every other fault; his fond solicitations, or high-wrought pictures of the felicity they are prevented from enjoying, increases her enthusiasm; and she either believes that the sun would ever shine upon them could their vows be once plighted, or that they should then live in a world of their own, insensible to the intervention of *external* miseries.

" Scarce one reflects that to the torch of love
" Perhaps succeeds pale discord's sullen fire;
" Few image woes which parents only prove,
" When daughters sicken, or when sons expire."

To the sure consequences of this extravagant expectation, let us add the effect which long-deferred hope must have on the

spirits and temper. Sometimes the prospect will be brightened with the view of a speedy conclusion; this will again disappear, and a final separation will seem inevitable. Jealousy will perhaps intervene; but whatever form the tormenting desire wears, disgust and indifference of the present will increase. No one more keenly feels the force of the scriptural aphorism, "that hope deferred maketh the heart sick," than she who surrenders her own to the heavy pressure of protracted love:

"Thus on her present hour rude passion preys,
"Thus bright the prospect of her future days,"

Can we picture worse bride-maids than broken spirits, irritable feelings, and sanguine expectations? or can we, viewing human nature as it really is, suppose it probable, that all external circumstances conjoining with the superlative excellence of the bridegroom, can prevent those wayward ladies from hurrying the bride

into some extravagance, before "those shoes grow old" which carri ed her to the altar? Among many other reasons which render novels dangerous to young women, is this; that they always make a long attachment which is not dissolved by death terminate in a happy marriage, whose felicity is *proportionable* to the previous embarrassments. I suppose their authors consider, that as our most agreeable feelings result from contrast, the same must be true in great events, as in matters of taste or in indifferent occurrences. I would advise these writers to look into life, and see if years of misery increase or diminish our relish of sublunary happiness; if the human fabric is undermined or improved by such a sickness as excluded hope; whether a quick succession of every agonizing sensation corrodes or corrects the temper; whether melancholy is a good preparation for the active duties of social life; whe-

ther the jealous, capricious, eccentric, or dissipated lover *always* produces the candid, affectionate, steady, and regular husband; in fine, whether marriage really is that scene of repose and full felicity which romantic love supposes; or whether its cares, its difficulties, and its trials are not at least equal to what the tender passion can excite in the virgin bosom.

Let us ask, Does the security of our tenure prevent us from discovering the inconveniences and blemishes that are attached to the habitation which we hold on a lease for life? Will not the frown of a husband affect the sensibility which was rent into *shivers* by the negligence of a lover; or will his humours seem more tolerable when we are compelled to *study* and yield to them, instead of making them subservient to our own? Or, to avoid sketching a portrait which you single ladies will call the caricature of disappointed

imprudence; will the dear good man never be ill, never be absent, or never be unhappy? Will his path of life be constantly smooth; will there be no obstacles to impede his course, no rivals to obstruct him, no misfortunes to depress him? Are children always healthy, amiable, and prosperous? If this be a just epitome of life, then may the lovelorn maid, when married to the idol of her fond heart, say in the language of scripture, "Soul, take thy ease; thou hast much goods laid up in store for many years." If it be not, then let all who approach the nuptial altar resolve never to withdraw the hand which they there lay upon the plough. Let them remember, that they *then* enter upon a state of enlarged duty and extended trial; and that they ought to rise superior to the petty occupations, and trivial cares, which might more pardonably engross their early years. Perhaps, this stern decision may cause a

great falling-off among my fair disciples, who think more of their bridal paraphernalia than of the contract, which it is intended to honour. I will endeavour to propitiate them by observing, that fastidiousness and susceptibility are greater enemies to conjugal happiness than vanity, and are harder to be eradicated.

Is it possible to love twice? is a common question. Certainly not, with all that enthusiasm of preference which attends a first attachment. But enthusiasm appears to be so doubtful a foundation whereon to raise the massy pile of lasting esteem, that I incline to think a second choice is more likely to be the result of judgment, and regulated by those just views which disappointment and experience mutually supply. Love, indeed, is painted *blind*, and so he generally is; but Hymen might be as properly exhibited looking through a microscope. A woman increases her

chance of happiness by prevailing on these deities to change their appendages, thus applying the microscope to the lover's character, and binding the bandage as close as possible over the faults of her husband. If after investigating the merits and defects of the man who addresses her, as narrowly as her situation will admit, she feels convinced that the latter will not diminish her decided preference for the former, I give her leave to accompany what I call the bequest of her heart with her hand. You see I have permitted Love to creep in at last; but with his wings so *pruned*, and his costume so deranged, that I question if any, excepting yourself, will feel much respect for a Cupid who is permitted to *look* about him, and forbidden to *fly* into the regions of Utopia.

But let our sex be as circumspect as possible, man, while he acts the part of a lover, wears a mask which we cannot

wholly penetrate. Perhaps it is uncandid to call this insincerity. When we wish to please, we almost unconsciously assume an agreeable aspect; nor do we at that moment resolve to indemnify ourselves, by future indulgence, for the restraints that we are then putting upon our bad propensities; perhaps we are hardly conscious that we are acting a part foreign to our natural character. How then is a young woman to discover the feigning, which is so justly copied from nature as probably to deceive the actor? I would not advise her *needlessly* to try the temper of a favoured lover; the power of recrimination is so great in the other sex, that to do so, equals the folly of irritating a lion whose den we are going to enter. Let no unpleasant recollections of female tyranny interrupt the complacence of the bridegroom on attaining the object of his wishes. But I am again reverting to past manners.

The new code of gallantry has deprived woman of the short empire which she once possessed, and compelled her to accommodate herself to the *humours* of him who pursues her with the provoking indifference of *assured* victory.

The nuptial band being knit (we will hope with happy auspices), let us consider what will be the first solicitude of a wife; and unquestionably this must be, to discover her husband's real dispositron. But her research must not be conducted with inquisitive penetration, nor with that strict scrutiny which may develope what might otherwise have been for ever unknown. It is too late to find out moral depravity; the attention of herself and her friends *ought* to have been directed to that important point before she had formed the indissoluble tie. It is to the certainly inferior requisites of taste and temper that a prudent wife should limit her

inquiries; for to temper she must conform; and it is possible for her to acquire a taste somewhat similar to her partner's. As her duty and her interest alike require her to make home agreeable, she must, if she be not by nature the companion that he prefers, endeavour to make herself so: I do not say by *art*—for I detest the word—but by *imitation.* I do not here recommend a close conformity to all the habits and pursuits of our partners, much less a servile adoption of all their sentiments and opinions: the latter would destroy one of the chief ends of marriage, mutual improvement; and the former would be more apt to excite rivalry than unity; men being extremely jealous of pre-eminence in every study to which they bend their attention. I suppose this duty to consist in cheerfully acquiescing with those customs and employments which seem habitual or necessary; never opposing his wishes in things

that are really immaterial; avoiding whatever is known to be disagreeable, either in our dress, our conversation, or our conduct; and above all, carefully attending to those oblique hints by which a delicate mind chooses rather to explain its wishes, than to appeal to authority by an express injunction; always remembering that the indulgence of our own humour affords but a momentary gratification; but that to oblige another produces a lasting delight; and if such observance be shown to a generous person it will be sure to be rewarded.

I mention it rather as an admonitory warning, than as a directing precept to my sex, that men are ever most easily vanquished by the *meanest* antagonists. An artful woman is a despicable creature, who departs from the ingenuous simplicity which, next to modesty, is the ornament of her sex. Yet I scarcely ever

knew a proficient in deception who did not govern all her male connexions, and moreover persuade them that she was a most amiable creature. Man is so enamoured of unresisting meekness, as to become the easy dupe of that *studied manner* which bespeaks its counterfeit. Give the Lords of the creation but the appearance of supremacy, and they are contented to obey. Suffer them to run their own wild career unrestrained, and they will gratify your vanity, humour your caprices, and readily make you, as far as relates to your own actions, sovereign queen. Hence come the splendid establishments of many pretty triflers; hence the subservience of uxorious keepers, and the influence of courtezans. A conscientious wife ever wishes to restrain her husband from doing what would prove *injurious* to his health, fortune, or reputation, which are too valuable in her eyes to be bartered for any

personal indulgence to herself. An artful woman places her own individual advantage in the first point of view; and her chief objection to a riotous debauch is, that its attendant fever may hurry the good man out of the world before he has time to appoint her residuary legatee. The pecuniary embarrassments of the family are of little consequence, provided her pin-money and settlement are secured by a responsible trust. Her caro sposo's reputation may be irreparably injured; no matter, her own stands firm; she has never interfered in his affairs, and no one can charge her with having suffered her sense of his ill conduct to spoil her temper. Every body is right to take care of themselves; and what could a prudent woman who had a refractory husband do, but lay the reins upon his neck, and leave him to play his wild gambols? She meanwhile, like the unjust steward, has

been making friends of "the mammon of unrighteousness." She has never failed in the offices of civility and attention to her acquaintance; she has accomodated every creature that she knew, to the utmost of her power; and they all can witness that she never suffered the pleasantry of her parties to be interrupted, though the gay votary of Bacchus in the shape of her disregarded husband, reeled in at an unexpected hour. Nor did her placid features suffer any discomposure, if in her way to the opera she encountered the chariot of his paramour. What an amiable creature! how often will she be preferred to her unhappy neighbour, who, shrinking under the pressure of a husband's shame, *immures* herself from the world, and weeps for the ills which she cannot cure! Yet surely, as far as relates to intrinsic worth, even the virago is a more respectable

character than the cold hearted dissembler, who makes carelessness and selfishness pass for self-command, and engrafts the insensible rapacity and negligence of a courtezan, on a character which demands the lively interest and active participation of generous friendship.

But do not, from my having incidentally named the blunt Xantippe with *comparative* honour, suppose I mean to insinuate, that a wayward husband may be *scolded* into propriety; or think that melancholy and complaint will recommend home to a refractory debauchee, and detach him from scenes of riotous festivity or criminal enjoyment, because I condemn that heedless apathy which many mistake for good humour. Home must, if possible, be always rendered pleasant to its master; and a wife must ever strive to be amiable in the eyes of her husband. The means of doing this

must depend upon circumstances, and her knowledge of his particular humour. The widow Bellmour, in "The Way to Keep Him," offers lessons to her sex which young wives might study with advantage; I mean in her first scenes with Mrs. Lovemore; they must, however, be adopted with *discreet* selection; for the variety of manner which she recommends seems more to resemble the flippant coquet panting for admiration, than that amiable desire of pleasing which actuates an affectionate wife, while striving to reclaim the heart of her husband. Women cannot be too strongly urged to renounce every species of artifice. Instead therefore of saying a bad temper must be *concealed*, let us endeavour to *subdue* it. The effort is nearly the same in either case; it is only changing the pernicious principle of expediency, which teaches occasional restrictions,

for that nobler motive of conscious rectitude which insures a perpetual victory.

But to return to the play we have just mentioned: I am not pleased with the eclaircissement; I mean, as a moral lesson; for we are not now examining its theatrical effect. Every prudent wife will, as she values her future peace, endeavour to save her faithless husband from the shame of *public* detection. The lordly nature of man so strongly revolts from the suspicion of inferiority, that a susceptible husband can never feel easy in the society of his wife, when he *knows* that she is acquainted with his vices, though he is well assured that her prudence, generosity, and affection, will prevent her from being a severe accuser. Mrs. Bellmour, therefore, in recommending that Lovemore should be probed to the quick before a large circle of

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witnesses, does not display that knowledge of mankind to which she pretends; and, notwithstanding the author wishes to convince us to the contrary, we can scarcely avoid suspecting that she is a false friend to his wife. The simple recipe, of making home agreeable, is better calculated to reclaim the libertine, than the artifices which Mrs. Lovemore adopts; and no woman of delicacy (I will add, of principle) will have recourse to the dangerous expedient of exciting jealousy in her husband: it may rouse him from the torpor of indifference, but it is at the expense of his confidence in her *virtue*. Even if her motive were merely to show him how nobly she can resist temptation, may she not fear he will remind her that *indiscretion* must have led her into danger? Chastity (like its male concomitant, courage,) courts no unnecessary trial. A

truly virtuous *wife* has little reason to fear the solicitations of illicit love. Some error must be seen in her manner, relaxed principles must peep through some disregarded loop-hole in her conduct, before the intentional seducer dares drop the mask of respectful friendship. Never, therefore, let an unhappy neglected wife try to reclaim her truant spouse, by showing him that the charms which he despises can make *other* conquests.

I have already deplored, that the manners of the age are unfavourable to conjugal fidelity; not only on account of the comparatively slight reproach attached to what are too generally called the errors of the heart, but also to those habits of society which separate the wife and the husband, and those false rules of gallantry which direct him to bestow his attention on other ladies, and her to accept the assiduities of other gentlemen; for, though

these customs are not in themselves positively criminal, they not only open a door to adultery, but also afford the security and concealment which it desires. It seems but a step from the preferred cicisbeo to the favourite lover; a male confidant and a gallant are almost synonymous. Slander too, by its premature degradation, sometimes *accelerates* the disgrace it feeds on. When an agreeable man becomes an intimate in a family, the mistress of which is young and beautiful, and the husband either engrossed by other pursuits, or negligent from indifference, every gossip in the neighbourhood snuffs the approaching crim. con.; and most unquestionably, the *reputation* of an intrigue has often produced one. Many a woman has intended nothing more than to spend the hours of solitude agreeably, or to dissipate vexatious thoughts while she chatted or danced with the captain in public, or ad-

mitted his private visits, though her invidious acquaintance have put the *oddest* constructions on such harmless liberties. But the captain is most probably less platonic than herself, and will soon convince her that she may as well *deserve* reproach as *endure* it.

Let us, therefore, obey the divine admonition, and "abstain even from the appearance of evil." If we have drawn a blank in the lottery of life, let us remember that we must not again try our fortunes. Yet though we cannot be *happy*, or even *contented*, we may be *resigned*. Faith and patience may obtain a serene triumph, though joy and gratitude do not swell a pæan of rapture. This is "not our abiding city:" pass but a few years, and all the pains and regrets that we now feel will appear but like a dream: we have it indeed in our power to make them not only durable but eternal: only add guilt

to disappointment, and the load becomes intolerable.

I acknowledge that a young and susceptible wife, who feels her confidence betrayed, her love rejected, and her anguish disregarded, by her sworn partner and dearest choice, is exposed to a most severe trial: especially if the cold, the capricious, the dissolute, or the tyrannical husband, be contrasted by the attentive, obsequious, and specious friend. The best heart may so far wander, as to wish that it had attached itself to this amiable being, who seems so fully sensible of her injured desert. Would to heaven that the much endangered fair one had, at this minute, the power to look into the bosom which she supposes to be the seat of every virtue! She would then discover that "all was false and hollow." He is only acting a part which perhaps her recreant spouse may be playing in some other

family; and as to marrying, if he had indeed met her before she had "been fast link'd and wedlock-bound," and a friend had questioned him upon the subject, he would have confest that matrimony was a trade he never intended to deal in, except in the way of partnership.

But may not the friendship of a man for a married woman be disinterested, and free from all base intentions? *Perhaps* it may; but if the parties are young, amiable, and in habits of peculiar intimacy, there is much cause to fear that such sinister views may intrude into original purity of purpose. If the friend be particularly solicitous to please, if he ever attempt to place the husband in an inferior point of view, either by discovering his foibles or shewing his own superiority; let the lady fly from the voice of the charmer, as she would from a lurk-

ing adder. But if the gentleman's conduct admit of no suspicious constructions, let her doubt *herself*. If she perceive that this agreeable and disinterested companion has made a deep impression upon (I will not say her heart, but) her imagination; if she find that he possesses a great share of her thoughts; if his unexpected absence make her uneasy, or if she be piqued by his attentions to other women; let her be assured that this friendship is of too susceptible a nature to be cherished with safety, and that she owes the renunciation of it, if not to her *virtue*, at least to her peace of mind.

The general adoption of continental manners having driven our sex from the strong-holds of decorum, no wonder that we have voluntarily abandoned the hill-fort of jealousy. It was indeed an ill-chosen and untenable post, serving rather to exhaust ourselves, than to subdue the

enemy. No woman, who now pretends to the name of fashionable, could forbear smiling at my supposing that her feelings could be irritated by a discovery of her husband's infidelities: but though such nonchalance is thought to have a very genteel air, to me it appears more like want of principle, than superabundance of equanimity and prudence. Surely there is nothing absurd in a lady's being distressed at the certainty that her husband lives in the practice of one of those sins which will exclude him from the kingdom of God; and if his *over-ruling* will compel her to stand gossip to his spurious issue, is it not better to perform that office with intercessive tears, than smiles of amiability? The rage of jealousy is, however, ill suited to a woman. We cannot cast off our offending partner "a prey to fortune;" and for our children's sake, if not for our own, we should prefer

the *nominal* protection of our husband to positive alienation. It is most advisable, therefore to restrain our curiosity, when we suspect that the gratification of it will produce distress. If the decencies of public manner are preserved, let us resolve never to attempt to discover what our husband carefully conceals; and let us spare him the disgrace of detection, which oftener conquers shame than sin. By studying to please him, and by conscientiously endeavouring to perform our own duty, we shall have daily opportunities of contrasting the loveliness of virtue with the deformity of vice; and unless he is indeed reprobate, and lost to grace, this opposition must make his evil courses uneasy to him. If we are compelled to *see* his misdeeds, let us notice them more as sincere christians, than as revengeful women; and show the sinner, that while we weep

and pray for his crime, we can practice the law that we acknowledge and *forgive* the injury.

In some cases, indeed, passive submission is impossible; I mean where the libertine glories in his iniquities, and boasts of what is his disgrace. Former ages would have supposed it was impossible that a man should expect his wife to visit or countenance his mistress; but the annals of the great world tell more than one example of such abominable depravity. Let the young lady who shudders at the possibility of such a proposal consider, that as it can only come from a hardened profligate, steeped to "the very hips in vice," the way to avoid it is, to resolve never to venture on the more than Herculean labour of reforming a rake; lest, after having given him such a proof of her want of true delicacy, he should think himself justified, at

some future period, in requesting her to set him down at the door of a brothel.

Suspicion is often a *spontaneous* production in the minds of women who have more affection than judgment; and surely, if Love ever designed to commit suicide, no baleful drug could be better adapted to his purpose. The sufferings of these self-tormentors, who are ever bewildering themselves in a maze of doubts, constructions, and discoveries, open an ample *field* for the comic muse; but I cannot think that Colman has done it justice in his character of Mrs. Oakly, in the "Jealous Wife." He seems to have designed to make her fond of her husband, and a gentlewoman; but in the warm colouring that he bestows on her suspicions, he loses sight of his original sketch, and the *vixen* predominates to such a degree that we turn from her in disgust; and the

denouement, though designed to be happy, proves mortifying.

We will now direct our attention to those trivial disputes, arising from petty causes, which frequently interrupt, and often destroy conjugal comfort. As, in the case of our husband's gross faults, we must beware of permitting our *male* acquaintance to engross too much of our attention; so, in his lesser peccadillos, let us refrain from opening our hearts to a *female* confidant. Married unhappiness, from whatever cause it springs, should never be suffered to meet the eye of others; nor must we, for the sake of covering ourselves with the glory of patient suffering, expose our wedded partners to reproach; which the world will be good-natured enough to remember, when we have entirely forgotten that it was founded on our own testimony. A zealous but indiscreet friend has often

ruined the peace of a young couple, who had no other fault than lively passions, and would have gone on with quarrels and reconciliations for their whole lives, alternately supremely happy and intensely miserable, had not some worthy confidant convinced the lady that she *deserved* a far better fate.

Here let me earnestly entreat the young wife not only to confine her sorrows to her own bosom, or to intrust them to some very *dispassionate* and *wise* counsellor, but also to refrain from swelling mole-hills into mountains. Let not her regret at perceiving some human imperfections in the master of her heart sink so deep into her fancy as to convert a fallible man into a hardened reprobate. If the error be venial, let her pass it in silence; at least till she shall have sufficiently ascertained the ground on which she stands, to enter with safety on the difficult task

of monitor. In all petty disputes, let her avoid the least shadow of exultation when she gains the victory: nor must she often expect concessions; which, when made, she should endeavour to soften, and receive them rather as a favour than a right. Recrimination must ever be avoided, and all references to former faults. The offences of another are no justification of our own; and what has been passed over and forgiven, must not be brought forward on a fresh provocation.

The best way of avoiding domestic contest is, for both parties to resolve never to attach importance to trifles; but this would be requiring too much from our fallible nature; the nerves of feeling are alike tremulous at the touch of pain and pleasure; and as trifles are the source of most of our joys, they must also produce the majority of our sorrows. We will then advise (and the counsel is not only archiepiscopal, but proceeds from one of

the first of Briti h worthies*), that the gentleman and lady should never wear the fool's cap at the same moment. A philosopher might suppose that this precept is not impracticable; for it seems p si ble, that of two human beings *one* may be in possession of *common sense*; and yet whoever knows the world must confess, that only a very sanguine expectation can look for uniform compliance with this rule; for, however galling the cap of folly evidently seems to the person who first puts it on, the affectionate partner cannot keep from *tugging at* it till he has stretched it wide enough to admit his own *noddle* also. Perhaps, therefore, matrimonial jars, like storms and tempests in the natural world, may be morally necessary, to prevent that absolute stagnation in the connubial atmosphere which generates indifference, the apoplexy of love.

* Archbishop Cranmer.

We must, therefore, (except among those very high-bred people who can *sting* each other with smiling suavity and graceful politeness,) allow a little *wholesome* contention. We will now suppose the combat over; the gentleman sullenly stalking along the library, and the lady in tears in her closet. It will now be acknowledged that both have time to reflect; and I sincerely hope that their thoughts will not be so far engrossed by the cruel usage they have both endured, as not to recollect that a fool's cap is very uneasy wearing. Whoever makes the first effort to throw it off recovers the title to superior wisdom. Conciliatory measures are first expected from our sex; and I pique myself upon this tacit acknowledgment of what I have always pleaded for, the intrinsic, though not ostensible, superiority of women. In some of the uneasy moments which precede the removal of the

above-named incumbrance (which is apt to stick as close as the tunic of Nessus), the indignant lady may perhaps compare her situation with that of some other happy wife, and her *tyrant* with some attentive *indulgent* husband. If she herself be a woman of prudence, it may happen that one of her own acquaintance, immersed in similar dolours, may at this moment be drawing the same conclusions on her apparent felicity. The proverb says, "There is an "anatomy in every closet, and they are "the wisest people who keep the door "locked;" and, let us ask ourselves, when we are admitted to such an intimacy in a family as to peep through the key-hole, have we ever failed to *discover* this mournful vestige of frail humanity?

In respect to the attentions which a wife ought to show her husband, these should rather be guided by his humour than her own. While some men con-

sider constant solicitude as the proof of love, others are disgusted by what they call "fuss and faddle." Men of strong sense and stern tempers are generally averse to whatever wears the shape of importunate care; and their estimation of their wives rises in proportion to the strength of mind and self-command which they possess. A woman should be particularly cautious of giving such a husband reason to *despise* her; they are apt to under-rate our sex, and impressions are generally deep as well as lasting on such minds. Whoever, therefore, is bound to a mate of this description should always aim at the possession of his esteem; and if she gain this point, I would request her to conquer the natural susceptibility of her sex so far as not to be pained at the omission of those attentions on his part, which, though mostly considered as proofs of affection, are overlooked or disdained by people of this

stamp, not through ill-nature, but from a turn of mind that will not allow them to ascribe importance to trifles. Such men are most capable of *steady* uniform affection; and if their general conduct give proof of this, a wife is not delicate but fretful, who torments herself and her good man because he has not learned to lisp in the language of adulation, nor to move in the prescribed form of heedful tenderness.

If in these circumstances it becomes our duty to bind the iron mail of fortitude on our bosom; so, in the case of our being wedded to a man of quick sensibility, refined imagination, or timid temper, it is equally incumbent on us not to wound his feelings by our levity, carelessness, or indifference; for in this light we must consider any habits which *endanger* his repose. A mind that is formed in this mould is not unapt to mistake fastidiousness

for feeling, and only to suppose itself very delicate when it is provokingly capricious. I will however acknowledge, that this is not genuine but pseudo-sensibility. It is by this affected acuteness of perception, this nicety of distinction, that the domestic tyrant often excuses his extravagancies; that is to say, he makes all around him miserable, because too many adjuncts enter into his idea of happiness. He cannot, like true sensibility, enjoy it in the rebound; nor, like benevolence, produce and cherish it in his own tranquil bosom. Heaven and earth must combine their influence to procure and rear the frail exotic; and when at last its flowers expand, and hope seems to touch the point of fruition, "a cursed east wind," or "an infernal shower," scatters its glowing petals, or wets its fragrant dust. Every one knows that a gentleman of *exquisite sensibility* cannot be comfortable

in an east wind, or a wet day; and in such excruciating, though not uncommon circumstances, a poor wife is but in the situation of a Lapland witch, who is constantly anathematized by her customers whenever the weather proves unfavourable.

As submission and observance do but confirm the malady of these gentlemen, which, whatever mental or physical form it may affect, I take to be the right sore disease of self-sufficiency and self-love; I sincerely wish the small remainder of the antient breed of "bonny Catherines," that *can still be found*, might be so disposed of, as to give them the opportunity of exerting their animating energies in the cure of these wayward Petruchios. The horrors of hypochondriacal conceit, fretful irritability, or moody melancholy, might be dissipated by the *necessity* of silencing a well-played sonorous female alarum. For, as these

sufferers are apt to forget that there are any other people in the world except themselves, or rather to suppose that the things they see moving around them, though apparently men and women, are really only blocks, automatons, and dumb waiters, such a peal as would *pierce* all but "the dull cold ear of death" may rouse them to recollect their social duties, and consequently make them *happy*. Observe, in this case, I tolerate scolding, not because (as some witlings maliciously assert) it is salubrious to the health of the lady, (for I am convinced it must always be inimical to the tender feelings and nice susceptibility of woman,) but as the only means of restoring the gentleman to convalescence; and a good wife, like our pious Eleanor, must not refuse to draw the poison from her husband's wounds, though the operation be both distasteful and dangerous.

If a woman be blessed with a consort whose true and noble tenderness is free from this vile adulteration of selfishness, let her show her value of her fair heritage by gratitude and content. Never let her impose upon real sensibility, nor pain indubitable affection, by *capricious* trials. Does her husband anxiously endeavour to promote her happiness, surely it must be her chief delight to show him that she is happy. Is he kindly alarmed at her indispositions, and agonized by her distress; she will never, for the sake of gratifying her vanity by a useless display of her power, affect the languor of disease, or the mournful aspect of grief. In proportion as she perceives his apprehensions for her to be *tremulously* alive, she will endeavour to acquire that patient fortitude and strength of mind which is not masculine, but angelical. It is to be lamented, that these Phœnixes of husbands often

fall into the hands of artful women, who estimate their worth, not according to its intrinsic value, but as it is a marketable commodity; and transform what was intended to present the liveliest portrait of human felicity, into the perverted homage which gentleness offers to caprice. Such ill-sorted pairs make one listen to Dr. Watts's conjectures respecting the disastrous dispersion of souls, which happened as the appointed partners took their flight to these lower regions.

I will mention but one other peculiarity of temper, and that is the choleric, which, unless it be indulged to a very wild extreme, is supposed to be most easily managed. It is unquestionably, infinitely preferable to quiet moodiness or melanlancholy peevishness. We can stoop to let the rushing whirlwind pass by us, knowing that it will soon spend itself, and that

peace and sunshine will succeed this apparent dissolution of the elements; but who can stand the continual bitings "of Zembla's frost," or the enervating moisture of Darien's putrid swamps, without material injury? No one betrays his sex's high prerogative so much as the passionate man; even in his very storm he merely scatters the seed of rebellion; and his infant girl calculates what play-things papa will give her to make it up with her when he becomes *good again.* Power cannot be secured by the discovery of an assailable post. If the bridle be held with a steady hand, obedience is uniform; but, as depression constantly succeeds overexertion, he who alternately curbs high, and rides with a loose rein, can never pretend to the praise of good horsemanship. Few men are in a greater state of subjection, not merely to their wives, but

also to their *domestics*, than they who frequently break out into *extravagant* fits of phrensy.

After having reprobated with so much severity those fashionable habits of separation which lead to conjugal infidelity, you will wonder to hear *me* say any thing against the opposite error, of too close domestication; but extremes are always reprehensible. Very few admonitions on this head will suffice; for what the Romans supposed of patricide is here realized; the fault is so rare, that prohibitions seem superfluous.

Every objection to individual seclusion from the world, as that it is likely to form the unsocial temper of misanthropy, and to introduce unpleasant habits and contracted notions, may be urged against an idea which sometimes adheres to a very affectionate couple beyond the honeymoon; namely, that each being to the other a world, the rest of their species

are to them non-entities. A very well-told tale, called "Variety," was published about thirty years ago on this subject. I forget its author, and know not whether it was much read; but the moral was worth regarding. A young, amiable, and much attached pair set out with the idea that they could not have too much of each other's society. In process of time, however, this exquisite feast of the flow of soul, being confined to only *two standing* dishes, loses its relish; and after a yawning evening, the husband informs his wife that he suspects "*they live too much together.*" A cousin Jenny is now introduced, who enlivens them with London anecdotes; and the tender pair resolve, for a time, to quit the retirement which they have so passionately preferred, and esteemed the bower of bliss, and try if the great world will not make them a *little* happier. The journey is described in natural and humorous colours; they plunge

not in vice, but in dissipation; they meet but rarely, and then with indifference. Mutually alarmed at this change (for their hearts are not vitiated), they determine to keep one evening disengaged to examine the cause; and, after a little investigation, the husband decides that "*they live too much asunder.*"

The application is anticipated. Occasional intervals are necessary to make even pleasure please. A man should come to his own fire-side as a weary bird does to his nest, not as the captive to his prison. The breaks into the domestic party must be regulated by external circumstances as well as by internal taste. If they are too frequent, simple delights and family duties will loose their attractions and their influence. If they are too rare, satiety will deprive us of our relish for what we should enjoy to the last moment

of our lives, and our notions will be as contracted as the circle in which we move.

The duty of a wife, as the regulator of domestic expence, has been anticipated by some former observations*. I have nothing more to say on this head, than to prescribe peculiar caution in the article of personal expenditure. Great expense in dress can never be justified in a matron, unless she, by that, complies with the *whim* of her husband, or with the *particular* claims of his situation, rank, or fortune. It is the undoubted duty of every woman to pay especial attention to the station that her husband holds in life. No error is more frequent among vulgar women, than to appear ashamed of the employment from which they derive their opulence. Every attempt to deck it out in false importance, or to disguise its real

* See Letter 2d.

nature, is an indication of a little mind, equally weak and unprincipled; for surely we are unjust to others when we force ourselves into a rank to which we have no proper pretensions. No employment can be discreditable which is pursued with honesty and industry; the shame attaches not to the *station*, but to the *individual*, who, by his attempts to escape from what he is, betrays a secret conciousness which degrades himself more than the pride of his superiors. The ingenious mechanic is as respectable in his own rank as the statesman or gentleman in theirs.—But I am wandering to another subject. I will now confine myself to advising women to scorn all false pretences, and never to hope that high-lived company will afford either advantage or pleasure to her, whose ticket of admission depends upon the assumption of borrowed honours. Should any personal or local advantages procure

her such distinction, let her not tarnish it by sophisticating the amiable simplicity of nature. The stolen plume of an esquire will not shade vulgarity; and the petty dealer and chapman will betray his littleness, though buttoned up in the respectable garb of a merchant. In every rank of life, *propriety* of conduct, and *suitability* of manners, command and also inspire, *respect*. The humour of the times makes these reflections peculiarly necessary to female vanity, which, with the folly to which vanity is ever subject, relinquishes real for artificial distinctions.

Beside the duties that we personally owe to a husband, there are often some mediate obligations which arise from marriage. If his parents survive, they extend to us the claim of paternity, and we owe them the same expressions of respect and habits of observance as to our own immediate progenitors. The office of a step-

mother is proverbially odious; and our observations on life favour the opinion, either that it is too great a trial for virtue, or that it is a situation in which merit cannot meet with due returns. There are, however, a few happy exceptions to this melancholy conclusion; and we may, on the whole, hope that a sincere disposition to act rightly, guided by a sound judgment, will in this, as in *all other* situations of life, enable us to acquit ourselves of this delicate task with conscientious impartiality. We may observe, that the charge is *voluntarily* undertaken; and they whose duty it is to perform it must remember, that after it is accepted they are no longer free to choose. The relative ties appendant to wifehood are as indissoluble as the connexion on which they depend; and if difficulty, inconvenience, or dislike, were admitted as reasons for our neglecting our positive duty, *every* ob-

ligation might easily be evaded. Did stepdames and their adopted charge mutually consider themselves as insuperably bound to each other, disagreement would be prevented from ripening into disgust, by the powerful restraint of self-interest. Married people seldom *hate* each other, till they have ruminated on the feasibility of *separation*.

Beside these very close connexions to which marriage frequently binds us, it generally introduces us to others that are more remote. Considering what human nature is, we should not sanguinely expect friends and admirers in the relations of our husband. If this happen to be the case, we should bless our good fortune; but it is too rare to justify complaint when we do not possess the good opinion of our new kindred. If they are not our enemies, we must be contented; and they seldom become so but through our own fault. The

suggestions I have already given respecting the preservation of family politeness and good breeding, are still more indispensably requisite in these adopted ties; for here habit will not restore the affection which has been interrupted by a sudden quarrel; it will be lucky if natural forbearance ever permit the unnecessary wound to be skinned over by cool civility. If conjugal affection prompt the husband to forget the claims of blood, a conscientious wife must feel great self-reproach; but, if he espouse the cause of his kindred, she is then indeed a wretch. As a preservative from these evils, let her guard against being too *early* or too *intimately* familiar with them; a fault into which our sex is too apt to fall. I do not mean that we should keep at a distance from our husband's family; but that our intercourse with them should be regulated by a *strict* attention to those rules of good-breeding and cau-

tion which we observe to strangers. The rule is reciprocal, and should be observed by both parties.

We have now reviewed the conjugal state, and will sum up the requisites for happiness. We will suppose a pair united by preference, blessed with easy fortunes and enlightened minds, free from the cravings of immoderate appetite, and unscourged by the remembrance of past misdeeds; we must also add, endued not only with moral but with christian principles, which are the only sure foundation of rectitude of conduct and peace of mind. We will not require that nice accordance of temper, or of taste, which would form tallies, not companions; we will limit our requisites to general suitability and mutual forbearance. Expense shall be regulated rather by the moderate desires of temperance and sober propriety, than by the alternate reaction of *parade* and *necessity*.

We will admit variety and festivity into the circle, as occasional guests; but we must insist, that cheerfulness and good-humour shall be *constantly* present: at least, if we allow them to be occasionally indisposed, we must always have them *within call*. Let health join the party; at least, let not hopeless sickness or extreme agony intrude; and you have all the enjoyments that this world affords. Poetry has painted the charming portrait, and, I trust many hearts can testify, without exaggerated colouring: I allude to the well-known lines of the bard of nature and moral purity, "But happy these, the happiest of their kind," &c.

And next to these, happy is she who can reconcile her mind to a less enviable lot, by remembering that we all enjoy infinitely more blessings than we deserve; and that afflictions are the merciful chastisements of the Almighty, to lead us to a region of in-

effable happiness, of which the *fairest* human copy can be but a dark imperfect outline. Every wish respecting this world should be limited by a reference to, and acquiescence in, the will of Him who knows what is best for us; but, in the world which is to come, our desires may *largely* expatiate. Whatever your temporal lot may be, may it serve to conduct you to the native regions of harmony and love!

Prays your affectionate friend.

LETTER XIII.

On the Duty of Mothers.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE maternal character generally follows the conjugal; the subject of this letter, therefore, is predetermined. You will here, as in my former epistles, be more disposed to expect moral and practical than scientific and speculative observations. I am too conscious of the limited sphere to which my remarks are bounded, to presume that I shall be able to present you with a well-digested system on education and family management. Indeed, systems on this subject are so apt to mislead, that my first advice to a sensible young mother would be, to disregard them, and to trust to

no other rule than her affectionate tenderness, restrained and stimulated by religious principle.

Education is become a most fashionable study, and has attracted the attention of many voluminous writers. The dangers to which we are now exposed are, that we shall grow too theoretical; that we shall attribute too much to *education*, and too little to *grace*; that by incessant discipline we shall fashion automatons instead of characters; or that excessive care will defeat its object. When we consider with what avidity mothers devour every hint on the subject of juvenile instruction, we seem required to felicitate the age on its moral improvement; for, unquestionably, I need not preface the desultory remarks contained in this letter by stimulating the maternal reader to fulfil this duty to her rising offspring. And yet, if we reflect on the turn that education has taken, we

may find cause for alarm at this universal rage for disciplining the youthful hope of Britain. Surely it is better to let a garden run wild than to plant it with hemlock and nightshade; in the former instance, it will produce useless weeds, in the latter noxious poisons. I have formerly shown* that infidelity and immorality have not been unsuccessful in their efforts to introduce their destructive tenets, under the specious pretext of improving the human race.

The greatest error that we can commit in education is, to limit its views to this world; and this must be the effect of every plan which discards the basis of our holy religion. No matter whether by a strict adherence to rule and system, and by diversified and well-digested studies, you form an intelligent philosopher, a polished philanthropist, or a lovely attractive crea-

* See Letters 5th and 10th.

ture; the first business of every mother is to rear "a child of God, a mem-"ber of Christ, and an inheritor of "the kingdom of heaven." Deistical morals never can accelerate this end, and morals from which christianity is systematically excluded *must be deistical.* This extraordinary, this avowed and radical defect in "Practical education," may perhaps proceed from the authors' confounding christian *sects* with christianity itself; and as they meant not to recommend any particular religious society to the preference of their readers, they thought themselves obliged to withhold from their theory the only invincible barrier to vice, and excitement to virtue. Nay, so delicate were they on this head, that even the obligations which may be derived from *natural* religion are not alluded to, nor one poor hope of an hereafter afforded, to teach the reader that he is less mortal than his fellow-

worm. This mistake (if it really be a mistake to call all religious persuasions by a name denoting unnecessary division) may teach us the extreme danger of that well-sounding liberality which recommends indifference to particular forms; since it seems probable that we shall soon lose all regard for the *substance* of religion, by pretending to keep ourselves *independent* of all parties.

The next error in education seems to be, the pains that are taken to make instruction wear such an agreeable habit, that children may be cheated or played into learning, rather than obliged to apply to it as a labour and a *duty*, as was formerly the custom. This method may form many intelligent infants, and some conversible men and women; it is to be doubted whether it will ever make a sound scholar; and we have seen it produce pert babies and coxcomical adults. But the

greatest danger arises from the moral injury which the character may receive, by being thus early habituated to do only such things as are *perfectly* agreeable.

Combined with this error, are the objects to which this premature infusion of science is directed. We aim at first opening the understanding; surely our chief attention should be paid to the temper and the heart. Of all infantine graces, affectionate simplicity and ingenuous playfulness are the most attractive; it is to be feared, that a very early course of philosophical experiment, and scientific scrutiny, must impress this pliant mass of docile imitation with a very different cast of character. However we may be amused with what is called a well-cultivated child, if it has lost the diffidence and credulity (shall I not say the *endearing* folly?) of its age, we rather consider it with wonder than

delight. The fruits of autumn cannot properly mingle with the snow-drops and violets of early spring; the painter who should combine them would become unnatural: time and place are what constitute beauty and agreeableness.

But if we only regret a want of diffidence in what is called a well educated child, or young person, we must have seen very little, or observed less. Diffidence has almost universally exchanged places with confidence. Unhappily, parents give too much proof that it is vanity, rather than affection, which induces them to bestow so much *culture* on their offspring; for they rarely rest satisfied with their attainments, unless they are shown and admired. Thus, a child who excels in any particular species of knowledge lives in a constant state of acquisition and exhibition, and treasures in its plastic memory the easily

comprehended language of praise. Address always implies perfect self-possession, and at the mature periods of life the want of it is a manifest disadvantage. But a child should be considered as a feeble being who runs to your bosom to be cherished; not as an accomplished gallant, who challenges your understanding by a display of his finished graces. The blush of simplicity and surprise, the naïveté of ignorance, even the tear of terror, or the struggle of occasional waywardness, impress the affections more forcibly, than the cold propriety of an artificial puppet, moved by the wires of discipline under the inspection of vanity.

In addressing my own sex, I must particularly attend to its errors. *Excessive* affection is one of the most common faults of mothers, and is generally apt to predominate among those

amiable women who employ themselves wholly in their domestic duties. A confined sphere of observation naturally makes them believe, that the "dear little creatures" to whom they cheerfully devote their lives are as interesting to every body else. Now, as this species of idols, in populous countries, are even more numerous than the gods of the heathens, it may be supposed that our friends have all got their hearts *pre-occupied* by domestic Lares, whom our "dear little creatures" cannot dispossess. Whenever, therefore, we introduce our darlings into company, we should previously teach them their inferiority. We should assure them, that it is a condescension in their elders to notice them, and that it is rude (or, with your leave, I will use the old word naughty) either to interrupt conversation, or to *intrude* upon any who are so kind as to com-

mend or amuse them, longer than they are desired so to do. The pleasure of a social party must be entirely spoiled if these rules are not adhered to; but a more important consideration arises from the effect which a contrary practice has upon the temper and disposition of the child. You lay the foundation of that overbearing character, which is no less opposite to female gentleness, than to manly greatness of soul; you introduce the germ of coxcomical impertinence and self-conceit; above all, you create the necessity of extraneous amusement, which is in a moral sense a fault and a misfortune. A child that is not much accustomed to be talked to, or played with, soon finds out a method of making itself happy. It is amazing in an age which professes to pay so much attention to all kinds of early culture, that we should neglect the simple rule of

suffering want to sharpen invention. This was the foundation of Rousseau's system, but he pushed it to excess, I quote an authority which is very dear to me, when I say that "more "children are spoiled by *over* attention "than by any other method." Many men express an apprehension of marrying an only daughter; being persuaded that the temper must be hurt and the character rendered fantastical, by having been the sole object of parental solicitude, which in this case often becomes idolatry. Children, whether many or few, who have been accustomed to be watched over with this species of anticipating, preventing, ever-wakeful care, only spend their early days in acquiring expectations, which will unfit them for the part they have to act in their remaining years. Extreme caution respecting health, though deserving of censure, is far less injurious than that

solicitude which *enervates* the mind. The tender mother who sends " her velvet-capp'd, fur-envelop'd" boy from the warm nursery, to encounter the cuffs and rebuffs, the heats and colds of a great school, has but exposed him to the danger of a hectic or a broken bone, the usual consequences of early fragility and inactivity; from which robustness and alacrity are the only preservatives. But if his mind be also enfeebled by the *observance*, if not the *indulgence*, of his perverse wayward humours; if importance be attached to all his motions; if provident affection anticipate all his wants, and all his words and actions seem worthy of admiration and record; how will this ill-fated child, when arrived at maturity, feel himself in a world where every one is either self engrossed or his competitor? The victim of irritable sensibility, whom I descri-

bed in my last letter, is generally thus formed by maternal supererogation to torment his future wife, and to create misery, needless contradiction, and slavish subservience for the unborn.

But wholly confining children to their nurseries is no cure for self-importance, because in that domain they generally reign sovereigns; and from knowing that they occupy the attention, and command the services of all around them, that *egotism* is fostered which it is most desirable to *subdue*. We shall learn how to act by our children, from attending to the purposes to which education should be applied. Its first aim is to make us good christians, its second to prepare us for performing our social duties. Let us then, as soon as possible, introduce those habits which are most useful, and those sentiments which are most just. Let every child be in-

structed in the *full* meaning of that popular hymn of Dr. Watts's, which begins with this admirable reflection:

Whene'er I take my walks abroad,
How many poor I see!
What shall I render to my God
For all his gifts to me?
Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more, &c.

I do not mean merely with respect to devotional or charitable impressions, but also to its own trivial consequence in the scale of animated nature. No idea is more fatal to the future improvement and happiness of a child, than undue self-consideration. Whoever has a strong propensity to this error in infancy, will require more management than any other disposition, because a mother must not only correct him but herself; for she must carefully *hide* from him her own affection, and endeavour to watch

over his safety, and improve his good qualities, with the unseen ministration of a guardian angel. As extraordinary acuteness often accompanies this high sense of desert, it will be in vain to seek to subdue it by telling him that he is a little weak, helpless, unworthy object, and that it is the benevolence of his attendants and friends which induces them to relieve his wants: the urchin will soon discover that mamma *idolizes* him, that her eye follows all his actions with silent applause, that she devotes herself and sacrifices her comforts to his convenience, and that the imperative manner for which she chides him is *afterwards* spoken of as a token of the dawning of a distinguished character. School is the most effectual cure for this malady in boys; and though much has been said to recommend domestic education for men, it still seems doubtful

whether its moral advantages are sufficiently evident to counterbalance its unavoidable defects, which arise from the want of the competiton and collision that produces fortitude, enterprise, decision, and energy, and (to speak coarsely but strongly) *jostles* every person into his *proper* place. Children (if untainted by vice) are the best correctors of each others' faults; and we rarely see those who have been much secluded from playfellows, and brought up with their seniors, who do not contract (beside great self-opinionatedness) a quaintness of expression, and an *artificial* manner, which after the period when every sort of prattle is pleasing, becomes disgusting and impedes their progress in the world.

If a mother would endeavour to command her own feelings, and to practise a sort of concealed attention to her

young charge, her watchfulness will answer the most beneficial purposes. Her children may sport around her, while to them she seems engrossed by a friend, by her work, or her amusements; from which she appears only casually to withdraw her attention, to correct a fault, or adjust a difference. Such interference will eradicate their natural errors, without introducing artificial ones. If she can conduct them to the age of adolescence with healthy bodies, docile tempers, just notions, benevolent hearts, and firm minds, she has performed the essential parts of her duty. Whatever instructions may be superadded will then stand on a sure foundation. If she be judicious, she will not aim at reducing their characters to one *prescribed* standard; she will suffer nature to send forth its vigorous shoots, and will only aim at pruning its excessive redundance, cut-

ting off its oblique branches, or eradicating its disease: in other words, principles should be introduced, and habits formed; but the original bent of character (if not vicious) should be suffered to remain. Indeed, nature generally imprints it with too powerful a hand, for education to efface the impression; and where we have so much to do which promises success, and requires diligence, we should avoid embarking in useless labours. Let her not be too anxious to form an infant Crichton; she will act more wisely in proportioning the *stream* of information to the capacity of the *recipient*, than by drowning the judgment through the flood-gates of memory. If she appeal to experience and general opinion, she will find that they do not report favourably of the permament produce of premature blossoms. It is extremely difficult to gratify

exalted expectation; and nature seldom evinces her full powers, but when she has been permitted to let the sun of manhood, or even the rough winds of autumnal life, "ripen the noble growth of thought." I fear these observations will be unpopular, especially at this period, when fantastic taste, in its search for novelty, demands an *impossible combination* of contrary qualities; and, by preferring what is wonderful to what is exhilarating, hurries genius into absurdity.

The female heart is apt to pant for distinction; and we must not wonder that this passion acts with full force in a near connexion, which being removed one degree from ourselves, diminishes the apprehension of error, and relieves us from the reproach of selfishness and vanity, even while we indulge *those* suggestions. Most mothers wish that

their sons may possess talent, and their daughters beauty. Johnson has exposed this "vanity of human wishes" in a most impressive manner, by describing the misery incident to their attainment. But how rarely is the desire *granted!* how few of the human race are distinguished for mental or personal excellence!—Common characters form the mass of society. Tell me, Is the admired science of education, which mothers study with such avidity, calculated to correct the faults and improve the virtues of these ordinary, but useful, nay important beings? Mocking-birds are numerous in the forests of America; and parrots and cockatoos almost nuisances in the West India islands; but even poetical imagination speaks of the phœnix as "one sole bird." And thus it happens in the human species, genius is seldom seen, but coxcombs are a numerous

race. The model of the Medicean Venus is rarely equalled by living symmetry; but we meet many nymphs, whose looks tell us that they are self-appointed rivals of the Cyprian Queen. If to the probability of disappointment we add the severe discipline to which genius and elegance must submit, ere they can hope to reach that standard of perfection which confers celebrity, and consider how often fear will deject hope, and defeat compel the disastrous competitor to retread the painful steps of instruction; surely mothers would act most wisely, by limiting their wishes to a sound mind, seated in a sound body.

But among the misfortunes of juvenile life, that of being the beauty or the wit of our own family seems most lamentable, because it is least apprehended. Yet surely, to be the object of *partial* affection, and *secret* envy, is

sufficient to rouse the apprehension of a susceptible mind; especially when we consider, that this evil assaults us at a time when our judgments afford us but little ballast, to keep us steady in this wild whirl of contrary passions. A great deal of natural good sense and agreeableness of person has thus been early perverted by vanity and affectation, and rendered odious. Let a mother endeavour to teach all her children, that the plain path of life is not only the most safe and easy, but also the most respectable. She need not fear that her admonitions will prevent real genius from exploring an untried road, through whose oblique paths it may be safely guided by its own unextinguishable lamp. A mind that feels its own powers cannot be restrained from its pursuits merely by being told that they will be to them difficult to accomplish; but we may hinder folly from

setting out under the guidance of that will-o'the-wisp conceit, and thus preserve it from being immersed in the quagmire of ridicule. Some tempers want encouragement; but to the majority of the human race in civilized states, the curb is more necessary than the spur. This is right, and most unquestionably all the purposes of Providence are right and wise. General indolence would be more fatal than general enterprise. A country may revive after a storm; but inaction is political annihilation. The miseries of savages proceed from that *indolence* which keeps them *savage*. But I am wandering from my subject. In this busy age, busy either in procuring the means or indulging in the act of self-enjoyment, we are not often called upon to stimulate the rising generation by teaching them to set a high value on their endowments.

Those theories of education must

be fundamentally wrong, which flatter the foibles that parental vanity is too apt to foster. Our children (I speak of them as washed in the laver of regeneration) are "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;" but *supremacy*, or even *superiority*, in this world can be the lot of but few. Instead, therefore, of labouring after early intelligence, let us build every improvement on the sure foundation of humility of mind. Extensive knowledge has never stood firm when placed on any other superstructure. Instead of forcing that literary taste which cannot possess any real discrimination, let us eradicate that fastidiousness which conceals a reluctance to be pleased, under the air of extraordinary delicacy. It is delightful, to see a child enter with all its soul into simple and natural amusements congenial to its age. We may hope that an en-

ergetic and independent mind will remain, when time has corrected its early errors: to pursue its sports, therefore, with an avidity bordering upon extravagance, is pardonable. But find me a child who is soon weary of what it longed for, who dislikes rather than disputes with its companions, who wants you to contrive its pleasures, who sickens with ideal disgusts, and finds a thousand circumstances necessary before it relishes amusements, and I shall foresee in that child the capricious husband, the fretful wife, or the useless hypochondriac; though, perhaps, the partial parents solace themselves with air-built calculations on the future products of its imagination, science, and refined taste.

Many systems of education are so impracticable, that it seems absurd to attack a fabric which its very plan

proclaims can *never* be *erected.* This impossibility does not, however, at first strike the speculator who attempts to realise the plausible vision; and it is not till after much useless expense of time and labour, that the mother discovers that an adherence to the prescribed rules will deprive her of all society, and indeed preclude her from discharging any duties, but those of teaching and watching her little ones. We must observe, that the conjugal and social character is most intimately blended with the maternal, to which the filial and fraternal are also frequently added. The theoretical instructor, who requires a mother to be the *constant* companion of her children, will render her such a wife as will drive most husbands from their own fire-sides, such a mistress as will suffer her household to run into disorder, and

such a neighbour as every one will avoid. Beside, it generally happens, that a family, if at all numerous, requires different exertions of maternal care, corresponding to diversity of age, dissimilarity of pursuits and occupations, a more infirm state of health, or some peculiarity in their future destination. In this case, what is to be done, but to *sacrifice* what is least to what is most important, to attend to the general outline rather than the particular filling up, and, after having regulated the heart and the temper, or, in better words, having sown the seeds of divine knowledge, to commend the event to God by humble prayer? A steady course of regular sober guidance has this advantage over elaborate tuition, that the mother who adheres to it is less apt to be disgusted by extreme exertion, and consequently has

not that temptation to *abandon* her design; and if she aims at but little, perseverance will produce an ampler harvest than can result from the capricious labours of overstrained but unequal exertion.

A writer on the subject of education, who is deeply impressed with the depravity of the lower orders, recommends it as expedient, and even supposes it feasible, that the children of a family should be preserved from all communication with servants. She does not particularize by whom the servile offices which childhood and infancy require are to be performed; and she confesses, that there must be some architectural alterations in our dwellings, before our domestics and our offspring can be so barricadoed from each other, that the latter shall never catch a contaminating glance of the former. Maugre the resentment of bricklayers and carpenters,

which *I* may justly apprehend, and though I *suspect* myself to be much more aristocratical than the ingenious suggester of this extraordinary precaution, I enter my strongest protest against a measure, which would only tend to increase the animosity now unhappily subsisting between masters and servants, and confirm (I speak plainly) their mutual guiltiness. A book *systematically* excluded from the elaborate treatise that I allude to, would have taught the writers, that "the rich and the poor meet together, and that the Lord is the Maker of them all." A wicked servant cannot corrupt a child who is *early* endued with good principles, unless parental neglect puts it into the power of the dependant. Let a mother, by good-humoured not wearisome tenderness, and inviolable fidelity, make herself the confident, and, as much as her duties will permit, the *associate* of her children, and she need

not fear that their minds will be vitiated, during the *short* intervals in which she intrusts them to the care of their attendants. She will find her children rather improved than corrupted by an occasional intercourse with *orderly* domestics, provided she strictly forbid tyranny and impertinence on the one part, and flattery and improper indulgence on the other; and the best method to have this command obeyed will be, to impose no whimsical restrictions, and to eradicate the first symptoms of domineering arrogance. Our minds can never acquire that capaciousness which our future commerce in life requires, by only mixing with *one* order in society, or imbibing *one* train of ideas. The narrative of a nursery maid's early life, a description of the wants which rendered her cottage hearth dreary, of the exertions which relieved those distresses, and the simple pleasures which

diversified those labours, related in the impressive language of nature, would afford an excellent lesson to a wayward girl, who is dissatisfied and petulant without even discovering the object at which her craving desires point. But I am afraid that my imagination has transported me to *past times*, in supposing a menial, in a *genteel family*, possessed of frankness and good-sense enough to enter into a conversation that would be fatal to all those inherent pretensions to elegance and independence, which our well-dressed hand-maids universally claim. The just inference which ought to be drawn from that lamentable corruption which has perverted the originally benevolent and useful institution of servitude, into a system of espionage and chicanery, is, that *mistresses* of families should again attend to their duty *as such*,—not that they should endeavour, by the adoption of fanciful schemes,

whose extravagant impracticability diminishes their danger, to *sever* what God has bound *together* by the strong tie of mutual wants. For let us recollect, that wealth and poverty, weakness and strength, authority and subservience, power and dependance, are not bestowed as blessings, nor inflicted as punishments, upon the individual, nor are they confined in their operation to the immediate self. They are distributed among mankind with a view to *general* benefit. The soul of the mistress is not more *intrinsically* valuable, than that of her handmaiden, in the eyes of God; her nature is not less corrupted, nor is her ultimate destination more exalted. Each has her appointed station in the great drama of life, and each is accountable for her conduct in discharging her relative functions. Shall we really improve the human race, by impressing the stamp of pride on the flexible heart of

youth? Children, unless carefully restrained, soon conceive improper notions of the inferiority of those whom they see appointed to minister to their wants: but surely no restraint, no admonition, would be sufficient to preserve the feelings of humanity in their bosoms, for a race of beings from whom they perceive themselves hedged and separated by barriers invincible even to that strong bond of mutual necessity, which unites frail and feeble humanity in serviceable intercourse, to the interruption of which (or rather to perverted communication, arising from every rank forgetting its due situation) the alarming increase of democratical manners must be ascribed.

Suffer your children therefore, in early life, to cultivate the benevolent affections, by acts of kindness and endearing attentions to your domestics, as well as to each other; and thus early habituate them to

the discharge of one branch of the extensive duties which they owe to their neighbours. This essentially differs from close intimacy, which is seldom beneficial to either party: but should you be so singularly fortunate as to possess a servant of *tried* integrity, bring up your children in the habit of considering such a one as an hereditary friend, who is entitled to the protection and good-will of all the branches of the family that they have faithfully served. Such treatment would induce servants to be faithful and regular, even on self-interested motives; and certainly it is a reward to which they are justly entitled, and should be *especially* required from those to whom their services in early life were particularly devoted. In old age, in sickness, or when they labour under the pressure of calamity, our active kindness is strictly due to those who ministered to our infantine wants, or

who served the necessities of our more advanced life. Besides these great calls on duty, there are a thousand little engaging offices, which children should be encouraged to perform to those who are about their persons; not from the selfish motives of procuring improper indulgence, but from disinterested good-will. Servants, however, like all other inferiors, are very dangerous confidants; those who have not sufficient intelligence, or who do not thoroughly understand all the relative duties of our station (which those who move in an inferior rank of life cannot do), are not *capable* of giving us useful council, nor have they firmness and independence enough to reprove us when we do wroug. They must, therefore, be at best useless depositaries of our secrets; and as it is most probable that they would confirm our vices by flattery, or enter into our views from a regard to their own private

advantage, their participation or connivance in our secrets is extremely dangerous. No consideration should induce a mother to intrust her children with a servant in whom she has discovered a propensity for intrigue; their acquiring awkward habits from an uncouth rustic attendant is comparatively of little consequence; vulgarity may be unlearned; but to teach the youthful mind hypocrisy will produce incalculable mischief.

It is a common fault in the theories of education, that one prescribed rule is laid down, without attending to differences of rank, fortune, temper, and scarcely sex. Some of our sciolists have indeed ridiculed all considerations of this last distinction, and have determined, that till the age of puberty boys and girls ought to have the same mode of instruction. Till society can be persuaded to *alter* all existing institutions, so as to render the of-

fices and duties of men and women exactly similar, it will be wise in us to adhere to the old method, which was founded on reason and revelation, and has been sanctioned by experience. It seems advisable, that mothers should early endeavour to give to each sex the proper bias; for, surely, fribbles and viragos are equally contemptible and unnatural. Let activity, energy, courage, and enterprise, particularly mark the boys. A man who is deficient in these qualities can only be a negatively good citizen, and may, indeed, be said to *encumber* rather than *strengthen* the commonwealth. If we wish our girls to be happy, we must try to make them docile, contented, prudent and domestic. Man must range abroad and forage for his family; woman "must look well to the ways of her household," and "bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The

passive virtues and the Christian graces, are her natural dowry; and surely a disposition which is more peculiarly calculated to bring forth the tree of life, cannot be considered as more steril than that *firmer* soil in which the tree of knowledge is most disposed to extend its knotted fibres.

I heard an eminent divine observe, "That men are taught to be do- "mestic tyrants in early life, by the "injudicious conduct of parents; who "accustom their boys to expect such "obsequiousness from their sisters, as "imprints their minds with indelible "opinions of the natural intrinsic "superiority of man." "Do not re- "gard what the girls say to you," is the common paternal precept; "Do as your brother bids you," is as frequently the injunction of the mother. I do not wish to have every family converted into a school of gallantry and chi-

valrous attention to women; but surely if ever the wise climax of seniority be inverted, it should be in favour of that sex to whom the habits of polished life invariably assign precedence. But the protection and respect, which the weaker sex was intended to derive from these punctilios of decorum, will effectually be counteracted, if contempt be made one of the domestic lessons that are daily inculcated in the family. Surely, it would improve the boisterous schoolboy, if he were convinced that his manly dignity would be more unequivocally shown by promoting the happiness of his sisters than by burying their dolls, and putting pattens on their cats. Let him be taught (and he cannot imbibe this notion too early) that nature has designed him to be the protector and friend of women; and let every attempt to tyrannize over or insult the females of his family

be *reprobated*, as a mark of mean selfish cowardice; not, as is too generally the case, *recorded* as a proof of wit, spirit, and intelligence. If mothers would but consider themselves as they really are, the guardians of the future generation of wives, the germ of domestic tyranny might be crushed in its bud.

My views of life are too limited to attach much value to my private opinions when they require the confirmation of extensive observation. I speak more from reflecting on abstract principles, and from a dislike of arguing from the abuse of any thing against its use, than from experience, when I remark, that boys are more likely to make not merely shining but valuable men, by being early thrown into active life, and accustomed to the contrariety of character and concussion of interests which are found in schools. A lad educated at home begins the world

with all the disadvantages incident to a *confined* view of the region that he is about to explore; and if he has had a very tender and very assiduous mother, there will be cause to apprehend, not only that fastidiousness or self-consequence of which we have already spoken, but that the timidity or effeminacy of his manners may cast a ridicule over his moral purity; which, when he comes to venture into mixed society, he will perhaps endeavour to obviate, not by the assumption of *hardihood*, but by the *affectation*, or even the *practice*, of vice. With respect to our sons, let us, then, be contented with watching their morals and correcting their tempers; their male friends, who generally fix their destination in life, will model their minds and manners by a standard which, if not directly congenial to our ideas, observation and reflection will convince us, is more consonant to the part that they will be required to act.

But though our superintendence of our sons must probably remit after they have attained the age of adolescence, our daughters will require our increasing care. To them our attentions will be highly beneficial, from their cradled infancy till we sink into our graves. If public education seem most likely to form the active being that man ought to be, domestic instruction promises to introduce those habits which will prepare a woman for the retired part that she has to perform. A girl is, unquestionably, a more tender care than a boy; every error is more glaring, and comes more feelingly to our hearts and bosoms. A false step is here irretrievable. Man can triumph not only over slander, but in some instances over shame; but if the breath of calumny blow upon the tender foliage of female fame, it is blasted *for ever*. When care becomes so important, surely those who are most interested in the welfare of the precious

charge should undertake the office of superintendence. Unless a mother be really unequal to the task of educating her daughters, or so engrossed by other *unavoidable* duties that she cannot command the leisure which is requisite, a boarding-school seems a less eligible situation for the early years of female life than the paternal dwelling. I do not mean to cast an invidious or a general reflection on the public instructors of our sex, nor on the morality of their seminaries; I hope the majority of governesses are conscientiously solicitous to discharge their *important* trust, and that their schools are as correct as it is possible for large associations of young people to be. The fault is in the manners of the age*, which

* The defects in public education, whether for boys or girls, can only be radically cured by a change of manners in *private* families.

attach undue pre-eminence to exterior graces and accomplishments; and of course these must be cultivated with most assiduity; for the credit and the emolument of the mistress induce her to stimulate youthful emulation, not only to *excel*, but to *exhibit* its acquirements, and to pique itself upon its superiority. It must also be remembered, that a boarding-school does not present such determinative advantages to girls, as will counterbalance this essential fault of fomenting that vanity to which they are unhappily too prone. The connexions formed by school-girls rarely ripen into valuable friendships; they do not reap that permanent advantage from opposition, or from observing diversity of character, which is necessary to those who must elbow their way through an opposing world. All the knowledge that is requisite for our sex may be acquired from

books, and from domestic observation, assisted by the judicious remarks of an intelligent mother. But, in giving this opinion, I am aware that many cases may be pleaded, where the *impossibility* of properly conducting female education at home, creates a necessity for removing daughters from the maternal eye. This frequently arises from a difficulty of acquiring a competent share of those ornamental accomplishments, which cannot at this time be wholly disregarded without incurring the *depressing feeling of inferiority*. Of two evils it is our duty to choose the least. Let the mother, who is thus circumstanced, employ the intervals of school vacation in obviating the ill effects incident to that mode of tuition. Let her repress the ebullitions of vanity, maintain the superiority of virtue over external gracefulness, and above all endeavour, by every means which her knowledge of her

daughter's temper suggests, to recover that confidential intercourse, and endearing friendship, which these estrangements are apt to interrupt, and which is really the most powerful objection against sending a girl from what is the natural sphere of her duties and delights, her own family.

A consideration of the painful disappointment which plain well-meaning mothers often experience, when they receive back their girls, polished into impertinence, from some vulgarly expensive school for *young ladies*, makes one earnestly wish that seminaries for the education of *young women* could be opened with any chance of success. This leads me to a subject which, though it requires the deepest consideration, is unhappily little attended to; I mean, that education should be suited to the *rank* in life, the *fortunes* and the *connexions* of our

children. To be *really* more refined than those around us is a misfortune, and a fruitful source of unhappiness to a delicate reflecting mind. A good heart and a sound judgment will, however, sweeten these bitter waters, by wisely and kindly condescending to bend to the gross capacities which it cannot illuminate. But refinement is more frequently fictitious than real; and miss despises her mamma, not because she is more *wise*, but from her being a much *greater* fool, which state is indeed hopeless; for ignorance, simplicity, and humility may be improved; but affectation and conceit, founded upon half information, never can.

Should we not be inclined to laugh at a mother who should bind up her child's feet and blacken her teeth, because it was *possible* she might marry a Chinese mandarin? Or what should we think of cramming a girl with milk and oatmeal till she

grew to an immoderate size, because the Bedouin Arabs estimate loveliness by the ton weight, and fill their harems with female porpoises? Yet if these nymphs were to be immediately shipped off for Canton, or sent to discover the centre of Africa, we should allow that these would be prudent provisions for their establishment. Do French, drawing, dancing, music, skill in dress, and all the pretty train of little graces and diminutive airs, which are so sedulously inculcated on the daughters of inferior tradesmen, yeomen, and mechanics, *promise* to be of more real advantage to them, than if they had spent their time in learning the customs and adopting the habits of *remote* nations? It is but just possible, that they may settle in a rank so much above their own as to prevent their accomplishments from being both inconvenient and ridiculous. A good education (in this perverted sense of the

word) is now too common to give *distinction* to its possessor. I see so strongly the very serious consequences of this worse than foolish, this insane predilection for acquirements and manners which give to their possessors, if in humble life, a meretricious rather than an engaging appearance, that I fear I weary you by my *frequent* reprehension of this increasing rage for imitative gentility.

There is a high and exalted destination to which every christian mother should direct her offspring to aspire. Let us all, therefore, studiously cultivate the graces of the heart; and in so doing let us not forget, that as they are the properest foundation for agreeable manners, so piety and virtue lose much of their merit when they reject the *exterior* adornment of amiable carriage. No station of life is precluded from the attainment of this criterion of true gentility. It varies, indeed,

with the circumstances of the person with whom it is connected; but whether it take the shape of refined politeness, simple elegance, respectful attention, modest civility, or blunt but friendly sincerity, it ever appears like the offspring of benevolence, and consequently is ever pleasing.

An obliging accommodating disposition, when it is not natural, may be formed by prudent attention to the manners of a person during their early life. A habit of saying and doing civil things is indeed afterwards taught by their intercourse with the world; but it is not merely *external* deportment, but the *inward* principle of urbanity, that we should seek to introduce. Fraternal love is considerably strengthened by preserving the laws of civility and decorum; and it must be a singularly amiable disposition, and uncommon natural affection, which can resist the perpetual irritation of rude and morose deportment. A harsh

expression to a brother or sister should never pass unreproved; a spirit of contention should be discouraged; envy and jealousy should be repressed by every method which reproof or exhortation, punishment or reward, encouragement or disgrace, can alternately supply; and most of all, by a strict observance of impartiality in the parent: for, if we suffer ourselves to be misled in our maternal superintendence by a spirit of favouritism, we take the surest means to ruin the temper and character of all our offspring, and to render our household the reverse of what called forth the rapturous exclamation of the Psalmist, "Behold how good and joy-"ful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell "together in unity!" Let it ever be remembered by those who have the charge of a family of children, that they are forming a sort of petty *commonwealth*, which ought to preserve its reciprocal

connexion and federal union, as its surest preservative against the animosity and opposition of the contentious neighbours among whom it is seated. Trifling disputes, petty contradictions, habits of incivility, harsh expressions, and uncomplying humours, create those animosities in early life which frequently lead to that most deplorable of all disagreements, family dissension. For, as kindred has power to brace the knot of friendship to *indissoluble* straitness, so it also possesses materials to kindle the never-dying flame of *irreconcilable* enmity, and to render the occasional intercourse, which often *must* subsist between the different branches of a family, a soul-harrowing torment to a susceptible heart, instead of a support in all its sorrows.

It is, therefore, one of the first duties of a mother to endeavour, by exciting reciprocal affection in her family, to secure

them mutual friends and assistants, even to that extended period of life when, according to the course of nature, she can no longer hope to minister to their wants and sorrows. To promote this happy end, she will (as I have just observed) be extremely careful to convince them of the *equality* of her own affection to them all; dealing out her dole of kindness, not as personal beauty, lively parts, or ingenious talents shall dictate, but candidly and fairly, according to those estimable qualities of the head and the heart which, being powerfully seconded by voluntary exertion, are therefore praise-worthy. But, in exercising this duty, affection must occasionally reject the guidance of tenderness, and call in the aid of authority. We cannot wonder that the advocates of anarchy should erase filial obedience from the catalogue of virtues, and even denominate it prejudice and narrowness of

soul. But as this country is not yet revolutionized; nor paganism established by law; while we continue to *call* ourselves Christians, we must insist upon the indelible obligation of the fifth commandment; which, with its corresponding duties, has united the world in the bond of social union for nearly six thousand years*. The perverseness of our nature appears so strongly in that period of life which is least under the guidance of reason, that every attempt to educate children on the principle of insinuation, collusion, or address, must be futile, and end in total disappointment. *Authority*, however, is not *austerity*; and while I reprobate the alarming tendency to domestic insubordination which is apparent in the prevailing system of instruction, I by no means wish

* The fifth commandment is here spoken of as a republication of the law of nature, of which many vestiges remain in the book of Genesis.

for the unmodified resumption of the old theory, which imposed a continual restraint upon child and parent, and chilled the exhilarating glow of mutual endearment. These extremes in management are alike fatal to that delightful interchange of sentiments and wishes which should ever take place between parents and children. If I insist least upon the mischiefs arising from over-severity, it is not because I suppose them to be less fatal, but from their appearing less *imminent*: general custom leans strongly to the opposite error. It sometimes happens, however, that the father of a family, either from partiality to the old school, or from the love of indulging his own humour, stretches authority into tyranny, and requires not the obedience, but the slavish subservience, of his children. Mistaking the opposite extreme of wrong for right, the mother in this case is often so hurt by

the sacrifices which *submission* is obliged to make to *caprice*, that she endeavours to repair the injury by the most endearing tenderness and unlimited indulgence. Children thus educated are mostly spoiled; they learn to hate their father and to despise their mother; for, sad to say! such is the capriciousness of human nature, that we are always inclined to under-value the tenderness which requires no sacrifices, and to fly from the preventing kindness which courts our acceptance. If the mother thinks that the paternal rein is held with too strict a hand, let her recollect that no good can accrue from an *avowed* disagreement among those who ought to be the ruling power in a family; nor can conviction of merit flow from stability of character in those whom she wishes to improve.

A woman whose disposition is not [illegible] she becomes

a nonentity, and nothing can be so detrimental to domestic good government as maternal insignificance. It implies the extinction of that intermediate power which should always subsist between the sovereign and the subject, and which, when properly exercised, harmonises the whole system. Though indulgence generally springs from a better disposition than harshness, its consequences are more ruinous to the objects on whom it is exercised. The petted child is always the least promising of the family.

Being a decided enemy to artifice, I cannot admit deception and contrivance to be useful allies in education. I fear little good has been done by attempting to *cheat* children into learning, and I am sure that cunning is still less proper as an agent to form their *moral* character. I would entreat mothers never to lay traps for the integrity or veracity of their chil-

dren, all temptations and contrivances of this kind are not only unfair but dangerous, and really tend to form knaves or liars. It is much better to prevent offences than to punish them; and we never can correct with effect, if we know that we ourselves have spread the snare which we foresaw youthful indiscretion and presumption could hardly avoid. Let us endeavour, from the earliest dawn of reason, to give our children good principles. Let us, by discriminating degrees of rewards and punishments, teach them early to *distinguish* between childish indiscretions and vices, between talents and virtues. This will often lead us to censure what strangers admire, and to pass over what casual observers think extremely wrong; but by so doing our children will only have the faults of their age, and will make up in simplicity and ingenuousness what they want in information and polish. When we have habi-

tuated them to a right way of thinking, let us appear to confide in the principles which we have established. I say *appear to confide*; for watchfulness must intermit slowly, and not resign its charge till experience has ascertained the prevalence of the good seed that we have so carefully sown. Unhappily, art and duplicity may have grown spontaneously in the minds of our children, though our own mode of proceeding with them has been most generous and open. Nothing should be more severely punished in a child than deceit, or an attempt to appear better than if really is. I do not, by this, mean the mere habit of excusing their faults; this is the common foible of infantine timidity, and is rather *increased* than *eradicated* by severity. I speak of the assumption of good qualities, and pretences to merit, which they do not possess. A child should never be suffered to praise itself,

even when it has really done well; but some mark of approbation should always be bestowed on those who have sufficient generosity to commend another and to conceal their own deserts.

It is the duty of a mother to study the characters of her children; and in this instance a sound judgment is most eminently serviceable. Let her not determine upon a child's disposition by one or two instances; character is variable, and in the early years of life it often has no fixed or determinable feature. Hence arises the advantage of judicious culture, especially with respect to temper, which is frequently what the poet calls "softened wax." Many people have been rendered *irremediably* petulant, vindictive, or suspicious, by improper management in their childhood. Teasing what is called a bad, but what perhaps only means a very susceptible temper, is the surest means to sour

the disposition, and to introduce malignity and misanthropy. The remedy should here be applied to the judgment, which we should endeavour to strengthen, instead of wounding the heart. By showing a fretful child the little value of the trifles by which it is agitated, you may give it firmness; but by suffering its playmates to do what they know will vex and distress it, you confirm it in its weakness; for peevishness does not exhaust but increase its own irritability by indulging it. I am now speaking of *natural*, not *artificial* susceptibility, and am supposing that you have not cockered your child into an impossibility of self-enjoyment. When peevishness really results from depressed spirits, it is better counteracted by affection than displeasure; especially when it is entirely devoid of envy, and accompanied with a sense of demerit. Capricious parents are apt to confound obsti-

nacy with firmness, though they differ as far as virtue and vice can do; for, as is the case in most other qualities of the human mind, pertinacity is fortitude pushed to excess. When we perceive a spirit of resistance to our commands, let us, before we rouse to the defence of our impleaded authority, do the intractable child the justice to reconsider the grounds of his dissent, and the reasonableness and propriety of our own injunction; and if we discover the error to have been in ourselves, let us beware of committing our supremacy and his obedience in future. Nonresistance was (as I before observed) the ruling error of past times; the present, among its other improvements, teaches us that reason is the *only* foundation of all authority. Admitting the truth of this position, surely we must wait till this quality is disclosed before we can apply to its decisions. If we press the unripe

grape, we shall not obtain *wine*, but *vinegar*. If we attempt to govern children by arguing them into propriety, before their judgment can tell them what propriety is, we shall make them pert, voluble, and refractory. In this system, they are never to submit but upon conviction: how very seldom will they be convinced, when their natural reluctance to yield is seconded by the interests of some powerful inclination! Whoever has witnessed the triumphs of reason over prejudice must have observed, that continued attention was necessary on one side, and great closeness of application on the other. Let us now observe how children *argue*, or rather *contend*; how opposite their questions are to the point in dispute, and how soon they lose sight of the first object, and start some other wayward desire; and we must acknowledge that reason has very little chance of

gaining the victory, when such disputants are created *umpires*.

We will appeal to the understanding as soon as it ripens; but this cannot be the case in early childhood; and yet childhood must not be neglected; for, if we omit early culture, vices and prejudices will overrun the untilled soil. Authority then must be the medium of instruction; the parent must have a *right* to command, and the child must feel that it is its *duty* to submit. An infant under seven years of age questioning the expediency of parental precepts, would formerly have been considered as a monster. What would our Sydneys, our Bacons, our Miltons, or even our Lockes, (for that eminent antagonist of tyranny* was so staunch an advocate for parental supremacy, as not to allow a child to have what it

* See Locke on Education, page 117.

craved or so much as asked for,) have said to the plan of improving infantine intelligence, by allowing it to cavil and dispute with its parents and instructors? Would they have considered our modern prodigies as auspicious omens or fearful portents.

As reason gathers strength, children should be taught to direct it against their own foibles, not to set it up as a judge to determine between their *desires* and our *injunctions*; much less should they be allowed to convert it into a censor upon our principles and mode of government. Early prohibition and correction should teach a child *what* are errors: when reason discovers *why* they are so, she confirms the dictates of experience.

A forward child should never be suffered to obtrude upon attention. Stimulants are here destructive; they should be reserved for the diffident. Confident

children so generally engage the attention of strangers, and shy ones are so constantly neglected, that it must be very difficult for a mother to prevent the faults of each from being confirmed whenever they are brought into company. She may, however, preserve her own mind from being prejudiced in favour of what rarely proves a lasting advantage; and by pointing out instances wherein casual observers have judged wrong, she may prevent one part of her charge from being too much elated or the other too much depressed, by the accidental commendations or neglect of visitants.

Injudicious parents take the most likely means to prevent the improvement of those children in whom they discover extraordinary marks of genius and intelligence; for, instead of considering that the amplef the field the greater cultivation it requires, they are apt to suppose that na-

ture has done all for them, and that we have nothing to do but *admire* the produce and put in the sickle. It is by slow degrees, by painful and progressive steps, that human ingenuity ever can hope to ascend the heights of science or knowledge. No one was ever able to fly to the summit of fame self-taught and self-supported; and the Icarus who attempts it will ever share the fate and the reproach of rash pretenders. Whenever a mother *really* discovers extraordinary talent in her family, let her recollect that a diamond must be highly wrought before it will diffuse lustre. Genius is often counterbalanced by numerous disadvantages. To render it a blessing to society, or to itself, it should be united to prudence, whom it generally disclaims, and, I must add, estranged from that very exquisite sensibility from which apparently it derives its energy. It must be taught to

speak in well modulated tones, or it cannot charm a fastidious age; it must borrow the clear lamp of learning, or an enlightened nation will disregard its discoveries; it must enforce the principles of truth and goodness, or it will become a blasting meteor instead of a guiding ray. Contrarieties must be united in its composition; the love of fame must be blended with native independence of mind; ardour of pursuit with diligence in execution; imagination must mix with judgment; impetuosity with self-command. Let the mother, who *clearly* discerns indisputable proofs of mental superiority in her child, seriously consider the high responsibility which such a trust imposes on her. The fatal miscarriages of genius are generally ascribable more to the bad qualities with which it was united, than to the opposition of envy and rivalship, or even to the withering mildew of neglect.

Extravagance and carelessness are frequently concomitants of superior parts. Blinded by parental vanity, injudicious mothers seldom require any other proof of their children's talents, than that they are disposed to say and do strange things, and have a total indifference for money. This latter disposition is scarcely considered as a fault in youth; yet certainly it never can be the parent of true generosity; for it is not benevolence, to give what we have not discovered to be valuable. Whatever may be children's rank in life, or prospect of fortune, it seems advisable that they should be early initiated into pecuniary knowledge; not to make them *penurious*, but liberal, charitable, and provident, to the extent which their future expectations will justify. "Do "not squander what will relieve a fellow-"creature. Do not spend *all* your allow-"ance, lest you should be forced to act

"meanly or uncharitably, from the inca-
"pacity of answering an unexpected de-
"mand. Calculate the expence of what
"you really want, and furnish the
"necessary sum by abstaining from
"capricious desires. Remember, that
"you will never hereafter reproach
"yourself for not having indulged
"your appetites: but that it is a
"*sin* to omit doing the good actions
"which you ought to perform." Surely these or similar precepts may be imprinted on young minds, without any danger of inculcating the horrid and unnatural vice of early avarice. Though the proportion of a child's pocket-money ought to vary with its rank and situation, the allowance should never be profuse, because an over liberal supply is more likely to corrupt its morals than to stimulate its beneficence; and though the entire sum should be submitted to its own management, independent of superintendance or control,

an intimation should be given, that this its little property really is an *accountable* talent, which cannot be wholly appropriated to the purposes of self-enjoyment without great injustice to its fellow-creatures.

Will you indulge me, in this place, with a few *critical* remarks? Benevolence is a marked feature in the fashionable system of education; and a multiplicity of books are composed, whose professed aim is to awaken in the juvenile mind a predilection for the duties of liberality. I fear they tend but little to cultivate those principles on which its real value essentially depends: I allude to tales in the manner of Marmontel which attach romantic sentiment and pompous notoriety to actions that ought to be considered as too *ordinary* and *indispensable* to deserve *record.* Casting my eyes over a newspaper, I will extract the following anecdote by way of illustration: "The em-

"peror Napoleon, when at Brienne, "heard that an old woman still lived "who inhabited a small cottage in the "middle of the wood, whither he had "frequently repaired, while at the mili- "tary school at Brienne, to drink milk. "His majesty bent his way thither, and "asked the old woman if she recollected "Buonaparte. On hearing his name, "the poor woman fell at the emperor's "feet. He raised her up, and asked "her if she had nothing to offer him. "Milk and eggs, answered the old "woman. The emperor took two "eggs, gave the old woman assurances "of his favour, and left her a purse of "gold."

When our Saviour enjoined us not to let our left hand know what our right hand did, he did not annex *praise* to *liberality* as its beatitude; but he commanded us to cultivate benevolence with privacy, and to expect its fruits after

the visible frame of nature shall be destroyed*. These anecdotes predispose the mind to seek after a contrarious alliance between charity and fame. A child should never be so far misled, as to suppose that it is *magnanimous* to do what it would really be *infamous* to omit. No merit should be attached to the resignation of superfluities, especially when the giver has not imbibed any provident care for the future. In many ranks of life, charity is accompanied by an act of self-denial which greatly enhances its value. The hungry school-boy who divides his breakfast with a beggar, and runs away to avoid being seen by his companions, possesses the right sort of internal feeling, and only wants the christian principle to be superadded to give it stability. But if you bestow very high commendations on this action,

* Compare St. Matthew, ch. vi. ver. 3. and ch. xxv. ver. 35, &c.

or to his knowledge give it publicity, you corrupt the ingenuousness of his nature; and the next time he performs it, vain-glory will taint the modest simplicity of his deportment. Though candour forbids us to particularize, can any one, who knows the world, avoid fearing that many of the deeds which we extol as the offspring of *charity*, are in reality those *indulgences* of *vanity* and *ostentation* for which we ought to ask pardon of God? One precept of Scripture deeply engraven on the heart does more to cultivate a heavenly disposition, than all the volumes which sentimental philanthropy ever composed.

Feeling and sentiment are indeed too loose and indeterminate in their nature, to allow us to build upon them that massy pile of acceptable good works which is to endure through all eternity. A florid description of distress, dressed

up in the pomp of oratory, may accelerate the design of public contributions; but it never can form the consistent character of habitual benevolence, which bestows its alms, not to relieve itself from the painful emotions of compassion, much less to purchase a sort of decent covering for its own sins, but because it is commanded "to do good and to be ready to distribute." It neither says to the Almighty, "Why didst thou ordain calamity?" nor does it blow the Pharisaical trumpet, and call upon its neighbours to witness its distribution of alms; but it *secretly* deals out that dole to the unfortunate, which, thus bestowed, will be replaced by everlasting treasures. In these *pretty* tales, by which bounty is tricked out in adventitious amiableness, so much of gauzy refinement and sentimental interest is hung around the object in distress, that the authoritative precept of "feeding the

hungry and clothing the naked," be cause they are the servants of Christ, is overlooked in the exquisite delight of relieving indigent beauty, or rewarding faithful love. While our children are nurtured by this ornamented charity, this unstable offspring of a vain imagination, can we wonder that the grace which holy writ commands, should be lowered into a commutation for gross offences, or that we should often hear those sins, which we are expressly told will exclude us from the kingdom of God, palliated, if not justified, because the wealthy offender is very charitable? Charity, my dear young friend, in the true sense of the word, cannot subsist in the heart which is at enmity with God; for charity is obedience to the commands of the Most High, and faith in his promises of remuneration.

To return to the subject of early eco-

nomic habits, so much scouted, and yet so highly necessary to the generality of mankind; few of whom are born to spend a fortune, compared with those who must improve or acquire the means of subsistence. Though I profess to abstain, in this letter, from what is called *scientific* instruction, I must recommend one branch of knowledge, on which sensible men ever set a great value in women; I mean, that every girl ought to possess a competent knowledge of arithmetic. It is also desirable that this knowledge should be practical as well as theoretical; that she should understand the value of commodities, be able to calculate expences, and to tell what a specific income will afford. These are excellent preparatives for a good housewife; yet, if they are accompanied with expertness, and practised with alacrity, the rudiments must be acquired in childhood. It may be

expedient to enlarge this sort of knowledge to a general acquaintance with the earnings of different trades and occupations; such information will not only prove an admirable assistant to domestic management, but will be an intelligent guide to benevolence. These acquisitions have a *moral* as well as a *prudential* influence upon the character, and are beneficial in every rank of life.

It is observed by the great Johnson, in a letter to one of the Miss Thrales, that "a thousand stories which the ignorant believe, die away when the "computist takes them in his gripe." The science of numbers may therefore be resorted to, not only as a guardian for prudence, but as a preservative from credulity; and what is of still more consequence, as a protection from the idle and vulgar habit of telling *extraordinary stories*

as *certain facts*, by which we subject our auditors either to the rudeness of contradiction, or to the pain of disingenuousness. Society is so generally improved in point of information, that lying fabulists now want the temptation to falsehood which the credulity of past times afforded; they cannot excite even momentary astonishment.

Neatness, regularity, and attention to the order and propriety of domestic concerns, so intimately belong to the female department, that she who is deficient in these qualities is universally allowed to have relinquished all the lesser decorums of her sex, if not to give proof of such a light and relaxed mind as makes the virtues she really possesses seem rather fortuitous than intrinsic. Most ranks in society require that *industry* should be added to this list of minor morals; a relish for occupation becomes

incumbent upon us all, not merely as it respects the advantage of others, but because, unless we *delight* in being employed, we must be *unhappy*. The habits on which these valuable endowments are built must be acquired in childhood or youth. They can never be superadded in mature age, without so much force and difficulty as make the practice distasteful; not, as it ought to be, in the highest degree gratifying and exhilarating to an energetic spirit, to whom the daudling languor of slatternly indolence is misery. It is with regret we observe, how much the modern method of education has degenerated from the practice of our ancestors in this instance; and as a propensity to throw away time is a marked feature of this age, it becomes highly incumbent on a mother to endeavour to revive the old notions in this respect. Let her steadily engage her children

(her daughters especially), before stubborn will and inveterate habit are armed against authority and exhortation, in a varied series of employments, which inclination should sometimes be allowed to *select*, but duty should more frequently *prescribe*; for in future life they will probably find it necessary to comform to this allotted order of occupations. By teaching them to be self-amused and contented with cheap common enjoyments and quiet pleasures, we shall not only render our girls more eligible as wives and as friends, but shall save them from the languor of ennui, fastidiousness, and all the long list of vapourish humours and maladies, that fall to the lot of those who suppose discontent and refinement to be synonimous.

Firmness and steadiness are essential

requisites in the character of a mother; yet our sex is reproached with a deficiency in these respects; and if the accusation be deserved, we have another reason to acknowledge the wisdom of divine Providence, in instituting the conjugal bond as a remedy for these, as well as for our other *imperfections*. Whenever a mother perceives herself sliding into irresolution and indecision, let her not consider it as a characteristic of an amiable yielding temper, but remember that her children will discover it to be weakness, and thus gain an advantage over her, which more severe discipline cannot for some time obviate. Let her not suffer herself to be *teased* out of her determinations, even when she is doubtful of their propriety; the alteration in her plans must appear to proceed from her own reconsideration,

and not from submitting her sense of right to their importunities. Mutability of purpose is the ruin of children, especially when it operates so far as to alter the system of education, to change the school, or to deviate from the original trade or profession to which they have been devoted. Nothing of this kind should be done, but for reasons almost amounting to *positive* necessity. When our minds are wavering in these particulars, we should consider that what is human cannot be perfect, and that objections may be made to every mode of tuition, to every instructor, and to every occupation; and therefore it is generally wiser to persevere in the course that we have engaged in, and endeavour to counteract the evils with which it is connected, than by a total dereliction of plan to unsettle the ideas of our children, and engage them and ourselves in fresh difficulties; thus running

the hazard of engendering inconsistent conduct and desultory habits.

You have found me to be a determined enemy to all those innovations, falsely called improvements, which either tend to confound the orders in society, or to rob children of that submissive simplicity which is their most endearing quality. Yet being far from wishing to recall those days, when coercion and terror were the *sole* instructors of youth, when docility consisted in *silent* acquiescence, and information, like the Roman lictors, bore no insignia but the rod; I readily admit, that a child should be assisted in the acquirement of clear ideas as soon as it can entertain them; and that just views of the world it inhabits should be presented to its observation, when its powers expand beyond the narrow range of *individual* feeling. This method of exercising the capacity of children is extremely different

from cherishing a disputatious sceptical humour; for this knowledge will be conveyed in the form of *preceptive* instruction, not argumentative controversy. Such real cultivation is, in fact, the only cure to the vanity, affectation, and conceit which a premature exercise of the deliberative faculties generally engenders. To know our actual situation in the world, is the best preparative for properly discharging our duties; and nothing can so effectually preserve us from the delusions of error, as a just sober way of thinking. Humble birth and lowly fortunes are no bar to this kind of improvement; for we are all rational and accountable creatures. Nor can it be objected, that these instructions will *consume* the time which should in such dependent situations be devoted to useful occupations: a mother, who has learned to think rightly herself, can communicate those ideas to her children while

they are actively pursuing their ordinary callings*. The commonest incidents of life will furnish an intelligent parent with lessons of "moral prudence," which if related in an agreeable and impressive style, will be "with delight received." "Every walk," as has been observed by an intelligent instructor of childhood, "may be converted into "an easy lecture on the works of "nature;" and when (as should ever be the case) the pupil's mind is led from sensible objects and visible events, to the unseen Author and Conductor of all things, philosophical investigation becomes what it ought to be, the handmaid of religion. Many sciences are recommended to our sex, for their

* Examples of this kind of instruction in a humble station are given in the account of Dr. Franklin's early life; where we may also meet with excellent rules to correct fastidiousness in regard to food and sensual indulgence.

utility in enabling us to form clear and precise notions; and when leisure and ability will admit, the mother is usefully employed who instructs her family in every branch of useful or ornamental knowledge. But there are some things which it is *desirable* to do, others which it is *criminal* to leave undone.

It being the first business of education to prepare the mind for that warfare with our spiritual enemies which will never finally terminate on this side the grave, and in which the Christian, though sometimes overpowered, must ever rise with renewed hope to overcome; let us, above all things, endeavour to equip the destined combatants "in the whole armour of God." Let us give them not only a thorough knowledge of their duty, but carefully exercise them in the *practice* of it; teaching them to act always upon Christian *principles*, and to view every event

through christian *optics*. This cannot be done, unless we make them intimately conversant with the truths of revelation; and surely no language can be so proper as that which the Spirit of God employed to instruct mankind, and of which we possess a sufficiently faithful translation* in our English Scriptures. Let me strongly urge every mother to make her children adepts in both the Old and New Testaments. Merely reading them is not sufficient; they should be taught to reflect and converse upon sacred subjects, as the only way of clearly understanding what they peruse. By the use of Bibles with marginal references, she may accustom them to illustrate precepts by facts, and to connect facts with precepts; the type and its antetype may be shown together, the prophecy and its

* On the fidelity and other excellencies of our English Bible, see the bishop of Lincoln's Elements, vol. ii. He calls it "a most wonderful and incomparable work."

fulfilment, the promise and its accomplishment, the threatening and the chastisement. Let her show them the vast superiority of sacred over profane history, not merely on account of its indubitable verity, or from its being the *oldest* authentic record of past ages, but because every fact that it contains is expressly said to be "written for our instruction." The method by which God saw fit to make himself known to mankind was by historical narrative; this being the least subject to imposture or misrepresentation, carrying with it the strongest evidence, and therefore being best suited to convince every understanding, and to impress its authority upon every age, from that which witnessed the event to the last records of time.* Let not the

* See an ingenious essay by the Rev. S. Cobbold on the subject, which gained the Norrisian prize in 1797.

minds of children, therefore, be suffered to rest in the mere circumstances of the narrative they are perusing, beautiful and impressive as they often are; but, as soon as their unfolding faculties will permit, open to their minds the *great designs* of God's providence, which the incidental sufferings or exaltation of good and bad men alternately furthered. It was not for his personal virtue, much less from partial affection, that Jacob was chosen to be the father of the promised seed, and Esau prohibited from receiving the blessing. Josiah was not slain in punishment for his sins, nor Jeroboam exalted over the degenerate house of David in consideration of his superior merit. In the first instance, Jacob, though exposed by his own duplicity to much temporal calamity, was foreseen to possess a more active dependance on the promises of God, of which he became the *faithful*, though

for many years *afflicted** depositary. In the second case, a righteous and pious prince was removed from witnessing the miseries which justly fell on a sinful impenitent people†; and in the third the Almighty acted according to the usual laws of his providential government, by raising up the wicked to correct those wanderers whom he wished to regather into his fold. All these, and other instances, as the bishop of Lincoln observes, from the sad proof of human corruption, show the necessity of a Redeemer.

Nothing is so apt to embarrass young minds, and to unsettle their faith and trust in God, as the apparently unequal

* "Few and evil have the days of the years of "my life been," said Jacob to Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. ver. 9.

† "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan "him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, "for he shall return no more, nor see his native "country. Jeremiah, ch. xxii. ver. 10.

dispensations of Providence, in often giving success to vice, and allotting afflictions to virtue. Temporal prosperity is now almost universally held out as the reward of desert, in those fictitious histories on which youth are too much made to depend for moral instruction; can we then wonder that dispassionate observers should lament that success is universally considered as the criterion of merit? A thorough acquaintance with the book of God will teach children to estimate human actions and human affairs by *juster* principles, and induce them to consider every instance of unequal distribution for which they cannot account, as an irrefragable confirmation of the certainty of a future state. Temporal prosperity was promised to the Jews collectively, provided they adhered to the law of the Lord; yet even during the period of their being governed by a supernatural theocracy, Gideon, Jephtha,

and Samuel, experienced hard returns of unkindness from the people whom they had protected, and closed a life of virtuous activity with an old age of sorrow. Rebellious Israel was *forgiven* many offences; but Moses, their distinguished conductor, the mediator of the first covenant, after faithfully discharging his arduous but glorious task during forty years, was for one offence *prohibited* from entering into the promised rest which he so ardently wished to partake; and, after being only permitted to gaze on the *earthly*, was removed to enjoy the splendour of a *heavenly* Canaan. In later times, the conscientious Naboth was cut off by the hypocritical cruelty of Jezebel; and Elijah, who was predestined to ascend the skies in a fiery vehicle without passing through the valley of the shadow of death, spent his days in hunger and thirst, in perils and dangers, continually pursued

by an implacable revengeful tyrant, till even his intrepid spirit, though supported by the supernatural aid of prophetical inspiration, uttered those bitter complaints against life which can only be excused by excruciating misery. With these powerful examples before our eyes, who shall say that the *gratification* of our wishes is a *blessing*, or temporal misfortunes a *curse*?

I must not multiply these reflections. The sacred volume presents innumerable instances, from which the judicious mother will derive the most salutary lessons, to correct the erroneous conclusions, and to temper the sanguine hopes, of impassioned youth. But the power of religion is still more efficacious in *forming* the *character*, than in *illuminating* the *understanding*. If children early discover strong passions and ardent desires, be assured that religion will

prove the only restraint which can be relied upon to prevent criminal indulgences; or, should they fall, it will enable them to rise again. There is little danger that those will long remain in the thraldom of sin, who have enjoyed the glorious privileges of being the enligtened servants of God, and can compare the difference between the two masters. The sullen and the envious may, under the influence of Christian principles, disencumber their dark and c ouded minds from the gloom of misanthropy and discontent; and patience and complacence may, under the exhilarating light of the divine Spirit, spring up in those hearts which, if left to canker under the baleful influence of crafty policy and crooked expedience, "would have brought "forth murders, adulteries, treasons, "and every evil work." A religious education would afford ballast to levity, and

confine within the bounds of innocent cheerfulness those exuberant spirits which might otherwise *mislead* their possessor to the extremes of thoughtless dissipation; and not to multiply instances, as religion presents the only just view of this probationary state, beholding the world as it is reflected by this just mirror will save young people from all those bitter pangs of disappointed expectation, which are so apt to nip the opening joys of youth.

Let mothers then begin early to bring their children to Christ*. Let them

* I shall make no apology for transcribing the following passage from Hey's Lectures, vol. iv. page 305, sincerely wishing that genius and piety may realise the portrait here so affectingly imagined. He is speaking of the Gospel in the office of baptism.

"Christ blessed the children affectionately, "holding them in his arms: his benediction,

" add line to line, precept to precept,
" dispensing here a little and there a

" surely, must be some spiritual good. My rea-
" son dares scarcely make an argument from this
" interesting scene; but when I contemplate it,
" I always wish myself a painter, that I might
" give a lasting representation of it. What an
" attitude might not that of Jesus be! what a
" countenance! looking down, with a mild and
" gracious benevolence, on the infant in his arms!
" expressing a deep knowledge of what was in
" man! other children of different ages and cha-
" racters, grouped in various employments; the
" officious disciples with ill-grounded apprehen-
" sions, and needless importunities, endeavour-
" ing to disperse them; the mother of the child
" in our Saviour's arms, near him, expressing,
" as one principal figure, in her face and gesture,
" suspense and hope, not without some degree of
" fear; joy, refined and meliorated with paternal
" affection and piety: other parents, some mild-
" ly triumphing in the benediction already receiv-
" ed, others gently pressing forward to attain it.
" Who that performs the ceremony of baptism

"little," as occasion shall suggest, from the first dawn of reason till their young charge, ripe in faith, renew their baptismal vows of obedience at the altar of God. With what transport must a parent kneel at the head of her pious offspring at the eucharistical feast, while looking upwards she beholds in meditation her saviour and her God, and addresses him with "Lo, I come; and of the children "whom thou hast given me I have lost "none!"

Few, however, can *enjoy*, and *none* perhaps ought to *expect*, such a full consummation of their labours. In education, as in every sublunary undertaking, troubles and disappointments will

"does not feel the efficacy of this scene? The in-
"fant in one's arms excites a sentiment of ten-
"derness; and the ceremony becomes, to the
"imagination, an imitation of the benevolence
"of him who appointed it."

intervene. Sometimes the steril soil defies all culture, and is either totally barren, or produces only pernicious unsightly weeds. This case, indeed, rarely happens when much pains have been taken—never, I should hope, unless the natural capacity is extremely defective—and in that instance we may rely on the righteousness of God, who does not expect to reap where he has not sown. Thorns and briers, indeed, frequently sprout up with the good seed, and either for a time smother it, or prevent its luxuriant growth. Yet in this case also we must not sorrow as those without hope; for, if the word of God has been grafted in the soul, even in the eleventh hour, the barren tree may bring forth fruit unto life. In the event of those wasteful storms of misfortune from which none of the race of Adam can hope to be exempt, let us solace ourselves with

the consolation, that we have *provided* our young ones with a safe retreat from the *tempest.* And should the irremediable scythe of Death prematurely cut down the just blooming flower, surely we must "rejoice with exceeding great "joy," in the confidence that it will be replanted, and flourish for ever, beside the river of life which flows through the holy city the new Jerusalem, which needeth not the faint lustre of the sun, but is enlightened by the glory of her God.

One consolation will attend the truly conscientious mother in the most disastrous circumstances: I refer to the heartfelt satisfaction that she has done her duty, for which she may humbly hope to receive her everlasting reward: I mean, if her conduct has been *uniform;* if her life and behaviour have been *consistent* with her precepts; and if she has been as careful to prevent her chil-

dren from *seeing* in her what was *evil*, as she has been diligent to instruct and confirm them in what is *good*. To these requisites I must also add, if, in full confidence of the insufficiency of all human means, she has not rested in her own care, or in the skill and assiduity of the instructors whom she has employed, but with daily and hourly *intenseness* of devotion, has supplicated Almighty God to bestow his heavenly benediction on her labours of love, and to crown them with success. If she has neglected this finishing duty, she must be pronouced unfit for the task that she undertook. She might teach religion as a system; but, not feeling its influence on her own heart, she could not communicate it as a living principle to others.

To those who have enjoyed the advantage of an enlightened and christian edu-

cation, I need not expatiate on its blessed tendency. Others who, amid many superfluous or immaterial acquisitions, remain destitute of that one thing peculiarly needful, "that pearl" of inestimable price, I would, in the Gospel language, conjure and entreat "to part with all they possess," sooner than not acquire it. Devote the morning of your lives to serious and valuable purposes. There is a marked analogy between the periods of our existence, and the hours of the natural day. How vigorous and refreshed do we feel when we first awake! how languid and exhausted do the fatigues incident to our occupations leave us at the close of a vexatious day! Exertion then seems impracticable; all that we require is relaxation or repose. We commonly rise from our beds calm and tranquil in our tempers, with our minds as well as our bodies braced for exertion. At night

we usually find that our cares and disappointments, teasing incidents and unexpected competitions, have ruffled if not annihilated this serene delight, which, ere we can compose ourselves to sleep, we labour to restore, by recalling the agreeable visions of the morning. The dull and heavy evening of old age will affect us in a similar manner. Happy those who can relieve its tediousness by the recollection of a well-spent youth, and can feed, during this barren season, on the nutritious fruits which memory *providently* stored. But those only can be said to enjoy even the dregs of life, who can look back on the smiling record of years of piety and virtue; for they are well assured that the "Creator, whom they "*remembered* in their youth," will never *desert* them in their hoary hairs, when all other consolations forsake them. That

you, my dear young friend, who were so eminently happy in your early instructions, may enjoy this enviable privilege at the close of your days, is both the wish and belief of

Your truly affectionate, &c.

LETTER XIV.

On our Duty to Servants and Inferiors.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

THE last relative situation of importance which we hold, is that of mistress of a family: with your permission, I will combine with it our general duty to our inferiors; since the observations upon one subject will in most cases apply to the other.

My rank in life having enabled me to see the lower orders, stripped of those disguises which cunning prompts them to assume in their intercourse with those who are too remote to judge of their real character, I am aware that my opinion of their present manners and sentiments

will be thought too unfavourable, by those who, taking only a distant glance of the humbler classes of society, consider them merely as victims of oppression, or objects of benevolence; while those who have had an opportunity for close investigation will join me in lamenting, that a great and an alarming revolution has taken place in the ideas and character of the commonalty. This is most apparent among the manufacturing classes: but the peasantry have not escaped the contagion, especially those who reside in the neighbourhood of flourishing towns; and it is to this cause that the degeneracy of servants (which is an ample subject of complaint in all companies) must be *primarily* attributed. Did this evil only threaten the destruction of our domestic comfort, we should have great cause for alarm; but if the "lying spirit" which has gone abroad among the poor of this realm continue to make

proselytes as rapidly as it has done of late years, our national subjugation cannot be very remote.

Do not suppose I mean to insinuate that there subsists a general spirit of disaffection to the present government. Considering the extraordinary pains that have been taken to excite the passions of the mob in this respect, the populace may be said to have resisted temptation *nobly*; and except among some sectaries whose principles are professedly republican, people are generally content to be governed as their ancestors have been. But the temper that justly excites apprehension is, their increasing dislike of their *immediate* superiors, which breaks out all the modes of envy, incivility, and pacity. You will smile at my ranking *pacity* among the crimes of a poor son; but suffer me to explain. Notstanding that great increase of wages

which the scarcity five years ago rendered both just and necessary, suffered little or no reduction in the interval of cheapness (I mean during the amazing reduction in the price of corn, the great article of sustenance among the poor), scarcely any thought themselves *bound* (as they formerly supposed themselves) to lay up a provision for sickness and calamity. Their earnings were dissipated in a style of living and dress unbecoming their station, and on the least pressure of distress they *demanded*, not *solicited*, parochial relief; but as that relief was only given in such proportions as their wants rendered necessary, not as their luxuries required, their envy of those whom they beheld possessed of enjoyments which they had learned to value increased; and an inquiry, why one person ought to be richer than another, became general; not considering that, by so doing, they cavilled against

Providence; and without reflecting that industry and œconomy are the sure, though slow, means to procure decent competence.

Factious demagogues have taken advantage of this sourness of disposition, which luxury and thoughtlessness introduced among the lower orders, who are now made perfectly acquainted with all the vices and follies which unhappily, in this dissipated age, disgrace the higher walks of life. You will frequently hear village politicians exclaiming against the manifest injustice of people being *permitted* to possess wealth who lead infamous lives. Does not this proceed from a want of those just *views* of life, and *clear* notions of duty, which were recommended in the preceding letter as incumbent upon all ranks and conditions of mankind? When did (or rather when can) an order of things subsist, in which wealth or power shall be *exclusively* assigned to

virtue and goodness? The trials of virtue cannot be its recompense. God did not intend earthly distinction to be the reward of his faithful servants. The responsible talents of riches and authority ever have been promiscuously intrusted to just and unjust stewards. In the hands of the former, they are a blessing to themselves and to all around them; with the latter, they become a curse and a punishment. But all who occupy the less accountable stations in life should ever look from the *agent* to the *employer*; and, whether our superiors are benefactors or oppressors, should remember that they possess but a delegated power, and in all cases be devoutly disposed to say with he pious Patriarch, "The lot falleth into "the lap, but the disposal of it is in the "Lord."

The poor of this kingdom were once distinguished by the moral propriety of

their opinions, and their affectionate attachment to their superiors. If you had *then* asked a plain countryman, what right a notoriously wicked man had to live in the best house in the village,—with some astonishment at the inquiry he would have answered, that "He was the eldest son of the old 'squire." Apply to a modern rustic, who has been *enlightened* by Paine's modified wild-fire, on the same occasion, and with a significant shake of his head he will answer, "Sad times, "master! things want mending; some-"thing must be wrong, or *rogues* "would not flourish while poor men "men are forced to work." Or, as I have known to be the case in an instance where a person of fortune united notorious profligacy with careless liberality, the reply has been to one who condemned the guilt and effrontery of *public* licentiousness, "This is a land of

"liberty; and every one has a right to "do what they like; the 'squire main- "tains my family, and that is all I care "about."

This leads me to what I would next observe, that the poor entertain very false notions of wealth; not only as to the rules by which it ought to be distributed, but of the manner in which it should be applied. Generally speaking, the ideas of indigence are extravagant; and thus it happens that profusion is sure to have advocates among the lower orders, whose notions of merit are mostly confined to two qualities, *bounty* and *affability*. How fortunate would it be for themselves, if honesty and prudence shared in these eulogiums! It is this error, imbibed in their paternal cottages, and fostered by their subsequent commerce with their own profession, that renders servants so generally wasteful, and inclined to sup-

port the appearance of the person they serve at the expence of his *credit*. Having very few ideas of distinction and consequence, but what are derived from show and expence, and believing their own dignity to be essentially combined with their master's, it becomes their constant aim to make him live, not as he can afford, but as other people do; and if they unhappily discover that he has a propensity to reserve some part of his income for future contingencies, they most generously resolve to protect him from the crime of being shabby, by every secret method of wasting or purloining his property that their ingenuity can devise; quieting their consciences with the salvo that, as he can afford it, he ought to be *made* to do so. Such monitors and administrators of the property of others seem unlearned in the plain rules of common honesty, though possibly they

are well versed in sentimental refinements. We cannot therefore, wonder that they should be inclined to palliate every vice but *avarice*, which indeed never meets with any *quarter*. Should this humour, of estimating crimes only as they affect ourselves, gain ground, I fear we shall degenerate into those dreadful extremes of heathen enormity, which St. Paul so forcibly describes in his epistle to the Romans; when after enumerating a black catalogue of heinous and unnatural offences, he tells his christian converts that they not only once did those things, but *also took pleasure in others for practising* them. The great change which christianity produced in the world was never more manifest, than in the alteration of public opinion, which though it often utters a hasty decision founded on *incomplete* evidence, used to give (and I trust,

in spite of the perverters of the human mind, will still give) suffrages in favour of virtue and goodness.

But enough of declamation: let us try if we can ascertain the causes of the change which we deplore, and thence endeavour to discover the cure. A great deal of mischief must be attributed to the dissemination of the idea of universal liberty, by which half-informed people always understand licentiousness. Much injury has been done to the lower orders by unsettled opinions on religious subjects. Vanity and conceit are the usual causes of dissent from established doctrines; and we rarely see a convert to new opinions in these matters, who does not, in his air and manner, discover unequivocal proofs of self-importance. Indeed, among the lower orders, few seem now disposed to take their "noiseless way along the cool sequestered vale of life," and to live ho-

nest, quiet, and respectable. The tenet that "we live in a land of liberty" (which, when misunderstood, is the foundation of all our religious and civil contests) is much oftener referred to, than the divinely enforced duties appending to the fifth commandment; though *all* men, especially those who are placed in a *humble station*, may in them trace one of the most comprehensive outlines of their christian course. The effect of preaching chiefly upon doctrinal, mysterious, and (strictly speaking) metaphysical subjects, is most strongly seen in the followers of this description of teachers, who are ever talking of *rights* and *privileges*; never of *obligations*. Here again the want of clear ideas and just notions is most obvious; for amid the torrent of language, which every gifted haranguer can pour forth on the most abstruse and recondite subjects, they rarely let fall a sentence that can be

understood by those who are not verssd in this cabalistic jargon.

It has been said, that the depravity of the lower orders is owing to the great separation in the conditions of society which refinement has introduced. Unquestionably, luxury has greatly tended to alienate the minds of inferiors from their betters, by the almost insuperable bars which it has placed between their free communication. When the feudal chief presided at the banquet among his vassals, and the farmer dined at the head of his labourers, the manners of the more intelligent were copied by the less informed; and the respectful awe inseparable from the presence of the master operated as a curb to improper expressions, and gradually infused decorum of conduct. It is to be feared, that in the present state of society such customs could not be safely resumed; but we may regret that they ever were laid

aside. The intrepid reformer who should attempt to revive them would probably only experience insult and ridicule, or familiariry would break down the few fences that are yet left round fortune and dignity. To confine my observations to my own sex, the tenant's daughter would visit the mansion-house, and the young cottager wolud go to the farmer's abode, only with a view of learning fashions, and of conducting their next party or junket in a more genteel style. Can we wonder at this, knowing that the view of the entertainers would rather be to *amaze* their guests, than to render them happy or to improve their moral character*? But to avoid visionary schemes: whenever modest simplicity of character insures us from the evils incident to familiarity, affability and condescension are the most likely means to conciliate and attach the lower

* Letter iv.

orders. These are favours which they peculiarly feel, and are perhaps more grateful for than for the positive exertions of benevolence. A kind remembrance of their wants, an affectionate concern for their welfare, a desire to promote their real interests, are attentions which forcibly attract the unsophisticated mind. Even in our domestic management, affability is strictly compatible with authority. Command need not speak in the voice of *terror*, nor accompany its injunction with *menaces*.

But perhaps the most influential cause of this change of manners and sentiments among the poor is the increasing luxury of the middle orders, who bind the extremes of society together, and consequently whose manners are the most important to the commonwealth. It is from our very immediate superiors that we all derive our ideas of what is just and desi-

rable; their station, therefore, is the point on which our ambition rests; for it rarely happens that our imagination takes so bold a flight, as to build its eyry on the lofty summit from which we are separated by *many* intermediate ranks. While we suffer from the vices of our inferiors, therefore, let us ask, Does no blame attach to ourselves? Have we not been so fond of distinction, so engrossed by pleasure, so entranced by views of advantage, as to forget our own responsibility to those who looked up to us? Can we then blame them for following the pattern that we set them, and becoming in their turns as aspiring, luxuriant, and indolent as is in their power? Example is a duty which we owe to all the world; and there is no person however humble his rank of limited his powers, but may thus benefit society; and if we pervert what should be for the improvement of those, a part

of whose duty it is to imitate us, "into an occasion for their falling," let us be assured, that a portion of their offences will be referred to us in the day when the Maker of both rich and poor shall claim an account of all our actions*. The larger our sphere of acting, the greater is our reponsibility; but all are accountable in some degree. The moral virtue of prudence should rise in our esteem, from the recollection, that a *small* deviation from it on our *own* part may lead others to *extravagance*, or even to *dishonesty*.

The middle orders may also be charged with another offence against their interiors, beside that of setting them a bad example: I mean, neglecting proper watchfulness and admonition. This is most lamentably visible in the conduct of masters and mistresses toward their domestics

* Letter iii.

and is not confined to persons in genteel life, but extends to those who ape gentility. The luxurious refinements in living that are generally adopted render adroitness in servants so essential, that the nobler distinction of moral worth is comparatively overlooked. As in most families the expense of being genteel operates as a severe check upon the inclination of shining, it is a general law, that show shall be procured at the *least possible cost*; and thus the number of our domestics being limited to bare necessity, we swelling frogs, who ape the magnificent oxen, are forced to transfer the vocations of several domestics to one. Thus it becomes necessary that a good servant should add dispatch to handiness; and provided they can but perform their work, few mistresses inquire further about their conduct, than as their vices affect the interests or safety of their employers. A servant

who is thus wearisomely occupied has little leisure for moral or religious considerations. I do not mean that intervals of leisure are positively necessary for a devout ejaculation or serious reflection; but these presuppose a foundation of religious knowledge and pious habits. Considering the present state of education among the poor, and the general manners of families, we shall be too sanguine if we expect that the majority of servants will be disposed to keep alive this religion of the *heart*, especially if we also recollect, that the multiplicity of minute attentions and successive occupations which we require of them, must perplex and harass their thoughts, and, if no intervals of rest are allowed, must even prevent the well-disposed from "pouring that oil into their lamps" which is necessary to keep them burning. What then will be the conduct of servants? They know that their

chance of advancement depends on their ability to execute the services required of them; and duplicity and cunning, which are vices common to all illiterate people, will lead them to suppose that *concealing* their sinful practices is quite sufficient; for, alas! it is a general opinion with them, that *detection* constitutes guilt: a melancholy proof how little the omnipresence of God is understood, or at least influences the behaviour of many nominal christians! Surely these evils might be diminished, by a more conscientious attention to the moral conduct of our dependants, and by expressing more displeasure at vice, than at those venial faults which only affect the propriety of our domestic arrangements. But the cure of this disorder must be sought in more powerful correctives.

The increasing profanation of the sabbatical rest is one great cause of the dege-

neracy, not only of servants, but of all the inferior conditions of society. It was not from the desire of hearing his creatures praise him, that the Almighty issued his command for a septenary remembrance of creation and redemption. He showed, by that institution, his benevolent regard to our temporal and eternal welfare. By hallowing the Lord's-day, we do not only learn those "songs of Sion in a strange land," which we may hope to sing for ever in the kingdom of our Father; but we diminish the evils incident to our *pilgrimage*, by acquiring those habits which will render *it* pleasant and prosperous. Whoever has seen the blessed effects of the Sabbath in an orderly country village, will readily acquiesce in the acknowledgment that it is the great civilizer of the lower orders. Suspension of toil, innocent recreation, decent apparel, comfortable food, domestic enjoyment, and social

worship, all present themselves to our view in the family of an industrious religious labourer; nor can we contemplate the cleanliness and modest propriety of their appearance, as they walk to "the house of the Lord their God," without a rapturous sensation of benevolent exultation. Let us now glance at the scenes which Sunday presents in the vicinity of flourishing manufactures, where promiscuous associations and enormous gains beget the disgusting habits of low debauchery. Labour indeed is suspended; but sin, like the Egyptian task-masters, demands her double tale of service. The filthy squalid rags worn all the week are laid aside, not to assume a neat simplicity of clean apparel, but to flaunt in a ridiculous medley of ill-sorted finery. The work-shop is deserted, but the church is unfrequented; the *ale*-houses are however well peopled; and though the wheel and the loom are

silent, drunken blasphemy and unrestrained indelicacy offend our ears with noises equally obstreperous. If we turn our eyes to the younger part of the mechanic's family, we shall see in their pursuits and conduct the future victims of prostitution and debauchery. Are not these scenes too general; has not depravity of manners uniformly kept pace with multiplied assemblage and superabundant provision? Manufacturing towns are the usual rendezvous of disaffection, tumult, profligacy, and misery. Surely then it is to be feared, that these inevitable evils, which are so intimately annexed to our commercial superiority, must very sensibly diminish its value in a national point of view. It is much to be lamented, that the comparative independence which is annexed to artificers and artisans removes them from the controlling superintendance of their immediate superior; who (if possible)

ought to be *armed with power* to prevent or punish those excesses which the streets of a great town generally present on Sunday evenings; for, even when the statute laws of the realm are not grossly violated, the moral feelings of christians are severely pained.

We have already lamented the bad consequences which the dissipation too common among great fashionists in the middle orders must have on their immediate dependents. As no people are so apt to utter dolorous complaints against the general depravity of servants, it seems desirable that they should take into their serious consideration the political expediency of restoring Sunday to its original destination. If they have on christian concern for the immortal interests of their fellow-creatures; if they really do not dread appearing, unprepared with an answer, at that awful audit when the souls of their

household (by them wilfully abandoned to perdition) will be required at their hands; still let them take those menials, whose good behaviour is so necessary to their own self-indulgence, where they will be *taught* to become *good servants.* This will be acting prudently, though not piously; but to do this will require some sacrifices. They can neither go out nor have visitors on Sundays; the full courses must be abridged; the toilet service must be shortened; the breakfast hour must be expedited; nay more, they must *accompany* their families to church themselves, and not only *give* them an opportunity of serving God, but actually *see* that they are present in his temple. One of the sad effects of itinerance in public worship is, that it *separates* the family, who ought to appear in their proper places in the *same* congregation; thus removing those whose conduct requires inspection, from those whose duty it is to

inspect. Unless you take them when you pay your own vows, your footman may probably frequent the tippling-house, instead of the conventicle; and your housemaid patrole the streets in search of a gallant, while you suppose her in pursuit of a ghostly comforter.

By some previous arrangements, and a few personal sacrifices, mistresses may generally contrive to give *every* member of their family an opportunity of attending public worship at least *once* in every Sabbath; but they must not suppose that they shall then have discharged all their duty: family prayer and social instruction are a very important, though much neglected, branch of duty, from which much real advantage may be expected. Did nothing better ensue than restraining irregularity and intemperance, by seeing *the* whole family early assembled on a Sunday evening in a state of sobriety and decorum, the benefit would be great; but we must

not mete by these short measures, when we speak of a religious household seriously employed in supplicating the blessing of Almighty God. We may certainly ascribe the comparative regularity which families formerly exhibited, to the uniform practice of family prayer; for, though such households *might* be mere seminaries of hypocrites, they who disregard or ridicule such services *must* be profligates. That this valuable custom is not now attended with similar decency of deportment in the few places where it is still preserved, must be ascribed to the general tendency of the times to ridicule all unusual strictness and sobriety, as unnecessary and puritanical; and to the unavoidable connection of servants who are thus disciplined, with those who are neglected and depraved; which seems likely to impede the former in their growth in grace; for "evil communica-

" tion is much more likely to corrupt " good manners," than vice is to derive advantage from the beneficial influence of virtue. If this custom were again universal, we should soon perceive its excellence. By doing all in our power to render it so, we at least discharge ourselves of blame; and in this, as in every other instance, when we do not reap the full harvest of our labours, we shall exonerate ourselves from the blame of sinful negligence.

A selection of books proper for servants' reading has lately been strongly recommended by very respectable authorities; and, no doubt, if they were discreetly chosen, and seconded by other measures, they would be eminently useful. Much good has certainly been done by the distribution of cheap well-principled tracts among the lower orders; but with the same, or perhaps still greater

avidity, has the evil spirit of insubordination and dissension seized upon their improved capacities to scatter his baneful principles; so that, in proportion as information has been multiplied, the circulation of pernicious doctrines has increased. I presume not to question the general utility of Sunday schools; they seem founded on two incontrovertibly just positions; that every soul in a christian country should be taught its duty to God, and be trained in an habitual reverence of the sabbath-day; but, unquestionably, there is a point at which the cultivation of the lower orders ought to stop. Writing and accounts appear superfluous instructions in the *humblest* walks of life; and, when imparted, have the general effect of making them ambitious, and disgusted with the servile offices which they are required to perform. It seems, therefore, a misap-

plication of benevolence, to communicate what will make the possessor unhappy; for hard toil and humble diligence are indispensably needful to the community; and we oftener want the hand of a *labourer* than of a *scribe*: nor should any ideas of refinement, or views of aggrandisement, be supplied, but when an evident superiority of genius, or weakness of frame, warrants a departure from established rules. People in the higher walks of life are apt to think that their own domestics are in a more eligible situation than their rustic equals; and in their benevolent endeavours to improve the general condition of the villages in which they reside, they consider it to be an unimpeachable exercise of charity when they fit the youth of both sexes for genteel service. If they attended to the gradation of ranks (which ought to be observed in the humbler

as well as in the more elevated classes), they would learn to *limit* these views, and would take especial care that conceit and profligacy do not thwart their generous design of making their protégés happy and respectable. The unsophisticated ploughman and milkmaid are infinitely more valuable, as rational beings and members of the commonwealth, than the coxcomical valet and pert abigail.

The degree of instruction which we bestow on our poor neighbours or servants should be fitted, as much as it can, to their relative stations. There can be no danger of our falling into any error, by labouring to make them plain and sincere christians; I now speak in a political sense: when I add, and members of the church of England. I mean not to deny piety and virtue, much less salvation, to other "congregations of christian men;" but

believing that the tenets of the establishment are *supereminently* calculated to combat the *errors of the times*, and being firmly convinced that there is safety and comfort in her spacious fold, I recommend it as an asylum to all who have not leisure to study the niceties and subtilties of disputation, and who yet must ever be subject to be tempest-tost "by adverse winds of doctrine," while they continue to assert their own liberty of election in a point where they do not possess capacity for decision, or leisure for investigation.

With respect to servants' libraries, those who form them will do well to observe, that the books which compose them should possess two requisites, or they will remain unread. They should be *appropriate*, and also *entertaining*. It is often said, that gentlemen's servants are the most dissolute set of beings in

the kingdom: if this be true, it is a grievous reproach on the morals, as well as on the negligence, of their immediate rulers. The infectious nature of dissipation, and the tendency of all contagion to grow more inveterate the more it is diffused, convinces us that, while the master and mistress spend their time in idle extravagance, the servants will give up their hours of lounging attendance to vice; and that vice in the superior will be downright depravity when reflected by vulgar imitation. To hope that a few moral treatises laid in their way will correct the evil propensities which are perpetually excited by example, and encouraged by opportunity, is absurd. Books, it is to be feared, never can *diffuse* correctness into a licentious family; they may *preserve* an orderly one, and prevent its members from going out in their

hours of leisure to seek for less salutary recreation.

Books that are written for the instruction of the lower orders, are often penned in a style which their readers cannot understand; or else, under the idea of being made plain, they become dull and unimpressive. Clear ideas, natural turns of reflection, and forcible yet plain expressions, are the fundamentals on which popular addresses should be built. No one can reason with effect with an illiterate person, unless he experimentally knows how such persons *do* reason: hence an intimate acquaintance with the opinions and manners of humble life, becomes necessary to all who would reform its errors. When we can only say of these attempts that they are well meant, we actually deprive them of all pretensions to utility. A person of education is of-

tener induced to read *well-intentioned* stupidity than one in low life. The popularity of enthusiastical preachers is acquired by their *animation*. Bishop Wilson's "Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" may be considered as a model for religious tracts that are addressed to the uninformed. It is concise and yet full, perspicuous yet animating. There is nothing in it that is superfluous, no unnecessary affectation of learning, no rapturous flights of devotion, nothing to weary attention, to excite doubt, or to engender extravagance. Many excellent works of this truly apostolical prelate deserve similar praise. Mr. Nelson's "Companion for the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England" combines the narratives that are most interesting to christians, with the doctrines of our religion and the distinguishing excellencies of our vener-

ble establishment. Archbishop Secker's "Lectures on the Catechism" is a very superior work; but perhaps it may be objected to its use on this occasion, that it supposes a greater degree of previous information than servants usually possess, and should rather be ranked among the elementary treatises that are adapted to a *superior* walk of life. The like observations will apply to Bishop Porteus's "Principal Evidences of the Truth and divine Origin of the Christian Religion," and Bishop Percy's "Key to the New Testament." It is perhaps impertinent in me to observe, that these works will be eminently useful wherever the understanding has been sufficiently enlightened to comprehend the arguments and historical notices which they contain. The labours of Mrs. Trimmer to inform and correct the lower classes cannot, without ingratitude, be passed

over. Every friend to the religion of our country, and to social order, must confess the value of her services. Even in those works which are ostensibly less important, the same excellent principles are inculcated; and her fictitious histories have the merit of being at once instructive and interesting. I know not, my dear miss M——, whether you have met with a little tale by an anonymous author, entitled Lucy Franklin. It attacks that rage for finery which is so *unhappily* prevalent among young women in low life (and which mistresses of families *may* and *ought* to discourage); showing them, that it is the most likely means to plunge them into all the miseries of disgrace and ruin; for, that extravagance which leaves them unprovided in the hour of distress, and those exorbitant desires of distinction which their humble means cannot gratify, are the

very avenues through which vice and profligacy are sure to enter. Young women, who by these means solicit the notice or put themselves into the power of man, can hardly be said to be seduced; they are in fact their own betrayers, and spread the snare by which they are undone. I particularise the above tale for its *manner* as well as its *moral*. I have seen it forcibly interest the rank to which it is addressed, and therefore conclude that the author knew her readers and understood her subject; no very common or easy qualifications.

It has been suggested, that a proper selection of well-authenticated facts from newspapers, accompanied with short and significant comments, might form a very valuable sort of servants' hall common-place book: it is the kind of reading which generally pleases them, being short and pithy; and real history possesses

many advantages over fictitious, especially among that class of people who seldom bestow much attention on a narrative, till assured of its *authenticity*. But in all our selections of this kind we should remember, that those who attempt to corrupt the commonalty are aided by powerful abilities, and inculcate tenets peculiarly palatable to fallen humanity in an alluring fascinating style. We cannot therefore hope to have *unpleasant* truths regarded, unless we are very careful to *dress* them in an *agreeable* form. A weak defence of a good cause is rather injurious than beneficial, and is more apt to pervert the auditors, and incline them to be adversaries, than to win over neutrals (much less enemies) to the cause of truth.

Respecting the proper government of our families, it unquestionably lies in the happy medium between the extremes of

rigour and lenity, wearying watchfulness and careless neglect. It is certainly our duty to endeavour to promote the present comfort and ultimate advantage of all who minister to our wants and necessities. This should be done regularly and consistently, not capriciously and partially,—with a discriminating sense of superior desert, but without injustice to the rightful claims of any. Yet when we bestow peculiar favour in consequence of long or valuable service, or any other extraordinary merit, we must take care that it be of such a kind as will not unfit them for their station in life. We must never permit *idleness*, unless we mean to make them independent; nor should we allow them such indulgencies in their appetites or desires, as we know their limited means will not warrant in future. On no account should we permit them to despise or insult those to

whom they are intrinsically inferior, on account of the adventitious elevation which they derive from their connexion with us. Kindness does not show itself in flattering their *foibles*, or in fostering their *vanity*; but in a steady desire to promote their *real* happiness. We should allow occasional relaxation, not only for the management of their temporal and spiritual concerns, but also for the purposes of innocent amusement; though in this latter particular it will doubtless be advisable to preserve some sort of superintendance over their pleasures; for servants have often a most diabolical pride in deceiving their superiors; and those hours are most likely to be ill employed which are removed from all restraining control.

Watchfulness, therefore, becomes an essential part of a mistress's duty: how it can be practised by those "whose

feet never abide in their own house," is difficult to conceive. We require too much from that nature which self-examination must tell us is weak, frail, and corrupt, when we expect that those who have no permanent interest in our concerns will *supply* the care and good management which we *totally* omit. A negligent master and mistress are considered as lawful prey by their domestics; and those who are proverbially easy and know nothing, are at once cheated and despised for a disposition which (however it may engage the affection and esteem of generous and enlightened characters) seldom fails to excite the rapacity of the ignorant, who are wise only in cunning. It is this which makes a previous acquaintance with domestic affairs so necessary a part of a young woman's education; and it is to the neglect of this, that the knavery of ser-

vants may often be imputed; for they rarely attempt fraud and deceit, but when they think they may practice it with *impunity*. To speak impartially, may we not also ascribe capricious, petulant, and suspicious mistresses to the same source? By setting out with unbounded confidence in those who serve us, we certainly open the door for gross imposition; and as detection is sure to follow dishonesty sooner or later, the natural transition in our own minds will conduct us from *cheated credulity* to *unjust suspicion*; and if we are too little acquainted with household management to know when we meet with fidelity and industry, everlasting jealousy and contention are the consequence,—till, by a most uncomfortable and culpable perversion of our judgment, we include all servants in one iniquitous class of cheats and deceivers. The almost inevitable

consequence of this injurious conclusion is that all with whom we are concerned will prove to be so.

I am far from wishing a mistress of a family to be *wholly* engrossed with superintending the conduct of her household; much less would I have her establish a system of espionage, and create herself inquisitor general; for these measures would only render her hated and unhappy. It is sufficient if she uniformly display vigilance and intelligence. No fault, which she is *known* to have observed should be suffered to pass without a reprimand, proportioned (let me be permitted to observe) to the *moral turpitude* of the action, not to the *casual inconvenience* which arises from it. All wilful neglects, and even insolence of behaviour come under this description, because attention and civility are *positive* parts of a servant's duty as *prescribed* by the law of

God*: but awkwardness, forgetfulness, and error, should be treated with forgiving lenity. I am sorry to have observed, that among the vices of the lower orders falsehood and envy seem so predominant as to be almost incurable. They are however such black offences, that a conscientious mistress will never remit her endeavours to expel them from her own household. By way of curing the first, she should easily pardon faults that are frankly confessed; nor should she too strictly persevere in inquiries which she has reason to believe will create a strong temptation to duplicity. By these methods, and by uniformly expressing her detestation of falsehood and evasion, she may break a *young* servant of telling *lies of excuse*, which many

* "Servants, be subject to your own masters "with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, "but also to the froward. Not answering again. "Not slothful in business; not with eye-service."

of the lower orders affirm to be no sin. Another species of falsehood appears in mysterious secrecy, and frivolous deception. Every mistress must have observed, at times, in her family, a sort of petty duplicity, and insignificant breaches of trust; the real guilt of which consists not in the actions themselves, but in the pains that are taken to conceal them. I fear in the present state of servitude, we must either be content to pass over such provocations, or perform our family offices ourselves. Such conduct is, however, certainly blameable; and whenever a mistress is *constrained* to observe it, she should express her hearty disapprobation of every thing which is contrary to openness and candour. But I would advise those who are teased by these unpleasant, shuffling, mysterious proceedings, when they know them to be allied with valuable qualities (as is sometimes the case), occasionally to

appear not to observe them. Severity in trifles is sometimes a *cause*, and always an *excuse*, for this dubious behaviour. If, however, a mistress discover a constant tendency to disguise on all occasions, she must conclude that the integrity of that servant cannot be unimpeachable, nor to be depended upon in things of consequence. The only cure for malversation is religious principle; which, if firmly implanted in the mind, would prevent all that eye-service of which we so justly complain*.

I fear envy is such a mortal canker, that, when once it has deeply penetrated the heart, a total cure is impossible. It,

* "It is impossible to secure the duty of inferiors," says bishop Taylor, "but by conscience and good-will; unless provision could be made against their secret arts and concealments, which, as no providence can foresee, no diligence can cure."

however, frequently results from narrowness of thinking, and may be greatly counteracted by giving servants more enlarged views of the state of society, and their own positive duties and comforts: to do so, will not be teaching them refinement, but sense; and from the monarch on his throne, to the humble cottager, *sound sense* and *just opinions* are inestimable treasures. A steady rejection of a system of favouritism, and strict impartiality in domestic management, will at least relieve ourselves from the reproach of having tended to excite this malignant spirit.

Some well meaning people adopt an idea, that it is necessary to try the honesty and veracity of their servants by concerted proofs. You will, of course, expect me to reprobate a mode of conduct which is, in fact, usurping the post of the prince of darkness, and becoming at once the *seducer* and "the *accuser* of our

brethren." Many people never would have fallen into sin, but through the unlucky prevalence of a temptation which appeared to unite gratification and security. Before we lay a trap for a servant, let us reflect that there is a greater chance of our exciting a new desire, than that we shall stimulate an inveterate habit; and even in the case of old offenders, it is possible that they may have resolved against the crime, and were endeavouring to gain a victory over a sinful course, when we basely betrayed them, and thus crushed "the limed soul that struggled to get free." Let us consider too, that every time an offence is committed, remorse and compunction are *diminished.* The young beginner sins with fear and trembling; his tortured conscience so much afflicts him, that after the moment of commission he resolves to offend no more. Supposing him again overcome

by temptation, his concern decreases, till, if he persevere in an evil course, he finally vanquishes grief as well as shame. Thus by even allowing a hardened villain to *repeat* his crimes, we lessen the probability of his repentance, and become accessory to his final destruction. To *prevent* iniquity, not to *detect* and punish it, will be the study of a humane mistress.

Of course, all who are solicitous for the orderly government of their households, refuse to admit a servant without previously inquiring into their character. Hence it becomes the duty of every one to speak honestly and candidly of the domestics whom they discharge. A religious adherence to truth, in this particular, would greatly tend to improve the *morals* of servants; and it is to be hoped, that the interference of the legislature, and the imposition of severe penalties, will enforce punctuality from those whom

honour could not bind to *veracity*. It is false tenderness to disguise the faults of those whom you have found to be incorrigibly profligate; since by so doing, under the weak pretence of not robbing a poor servant of her bread, you may chance to introduce depravity into a well-principled household, some of whom they may probably contaminate. Certainly there are degrees of guilt; and when favourable circumstances appear in extenuation of a fault, let not resentment induce us to paint it in its blackest colours. We should in this case be so candid to inquirers, as to discover what was done amiss, that they may be guarded against bad consequences, supposing they venture upon the trial.

Faultless characters are not to be found, even in those situations most favourable to virtue; much less must we hope for them in the rank of life which

is *most* exposed to temptation, and furnished with but *weak* antidotes, either from education, habit, example, or general opinion. It is, therefore, more than possible, that those who believe themselves to possess a super-excellent dependent are the dupes of chicanery and duplicity. There are some qualities which are more especially to be valued, and others with which we may dispense. It is also possible, indeed I hope it often happens, that a servant is *reformed* by admonition, good example and discreet management. We must allow much for the errors of ignorance. That mild indulgence for female frailty, which it is so fashionable to claim from our sex, with respect to what are called gentle errors, though culpable and dangerous when exercised to those whom fortune secured from solicitation, and rank hedged round from pollution, is not only *merciful* but *just*, when excited

by the backslidings of the untaught child of indigence. It is in a humble station, in which loss of character exposes women to all the infamy and misery of venal prostitution, that we should extend our arm to rescue a *fallen sister*, and once more restore her to the *competence* of *industry*. Whenever youth, or extreme simplicity, or gross ignorance, or bad example, or strong temptation, or great neglect, can be pleaded in excuse of a *first* offence, pardon should be prompt. I do not say it should precede contrition in all instances; in some, perhaps, our first act of kindness must be to awaken remorse. We should, however, take care so to proportion our pity, that it can never be construed into an encouragement to sin. This caution is extremely necessary in these times, when it is lamentable to observe what slight ideas are formed of the value of chastity among women in low

life. Bastardy is scarcely reckoned a disgrace, and criminality before marriage is too common even to excite surprise. When we add, to this lax idea of our first distinction, the universal passion for dress and expence which has seized those who have no honest dependence but on frugality and industry, we must discover a most alarming prospect of degradation and extreme infamy. Yet where shall our censure point? Surely, at those who by their luxury and *untempted* profligacy set an example of evil; at those from whom as more inducements to virtue and better guards of discretion were given to them, more correctness of morals will be required.

I am firmly persuaded, that a *general determination* of mistresses to discountenance all *improper* and *unsuitable* apparel, all needless expence, and ridiculous imitation of fashionable modes,

would effect a speedy reformation in the appearance not only of female servants, but of all the humble ranks of life. But here unhappily, as in every other instance, our own vanity betrays us into the inconvenience which we afterwards find such cause to regret. Some silly gentlewoman, adopting the supercilious humour of Addison's Brunetta*, determines that her handmaid shall rival, in smartness, that competitor whom she herself cannot eclipse in taste or beauty. An attempt of this kind cannot be made without causing a general tumult in the neighbourhood; for all the Mollies and Betties immediately recollect some degrading anecdote of the poor decorated jackdaw, or some reason why they have an equal right to wear peacocks' feathers. No mistress (I mean no *vain* mistress, which qualified negative almost

* Spectator, No. 80.

amounts to a positive) likes to see her damsels look shabbier than those of other people; and the metamorphosis of gowns and bonnets becomes as general and instantaneous, as that which Ovid records of the stones flung by Deucalion; for, under the forming hand of a dress-maker and milliner, beauty and grace grow out of as shapeless masses, and the world seems peopled with another order of beings. The laws of Fashion are however, the exact reverse of those of the Medes and Persians; and her humble worshippers must find their time consumed, and their ingenuity and money wasted, by those liberal sacrifices to this deity which their slender means can ill afford. Thus *holiday* gentility begets *every day* untidiness, and occasional regard to appearance becomes another name for slatternliness. Young women used to consider servitude as the bank

on which they drew for their little marriage portion; and even in choosing their clothes the cautious *girl* looked forward to the future wants of the *Goody*, and evinced her provident regard to usefulness, by her preference of stout, everlasting, and substantial camlet. I suspect that no draper's shop could now furnish these, or even similar articles; and unquestionably, they would never meet with purchasers among our advocates for light floating drapery, who begin life with a resolution to spend as fast as they earn. Hence arise wretchedness and poverty in the married state; hence total dependence and helplessness in the case of sickness or any other misfortune; and hence are the haunts of prostitution thickly peopled with the miserable victims of vanity and extavagance; most of whom, from their *rapidly increasing* numbers, can have no resource but

to eat the wages of shame, till premature death terminates unspeakable misery.

Are these consequences deplorable? Is this portrait true? Then let the compassionate matron, who weeps over this devastation of female innocence, this defalcation of female utility and respectability, earnestly consider what she is doing, when she first *rouses the spirit of vanity* in the bosom of an artless rustic, by requiring from her young servants any further attention to dress than cleanliness and neatness, or encouraging a regard to appearance beyond an abhorrence of rags and filth. Even when some provision for future contingencies has been made, the dress of servants should always continue plain, uniform, and suited to their station; I mean in convenience of shape, as well as propriety of materials. Feathers rattling among our pots and saucepans, trains

sweeping our dripping-pans, and muslin dresses scrubbing our rooms, can only excite ludicrous ideas in the beholders; while the poor decorated block patiently endures the inconvenience, in the hope that every one will admire her elegance. But I have not yet mentioned that acme of absurdity (to give it no stronger name) to which *caricatured* refinement has *hurried* the age. Indelicacy treads upon the heels of impropriety. Diana, in her diamond crescent, cannot disrobe faster than the wood nymphs who attend her; and as Fielding observes of his Sophia, "when the lady uncovers her arms, "which have all the properties of wax "but that of melting, her maid Mrs. "Honour exhibits her resemblance of "bull-beef with equal sang-froid and "to the same extent." I have an aversion to the Venus de Médicis, even when

it is carved in alabaster; and I hope that the numerous brick-bat models which we meet with in sculleries will persuade the indignant goddess to resume her veil: till she sets the example, there is no hope of reformation. In vain shall we preach œconomy and propriety, if we show those who look up to us for examples the *method* of being extravagant and ridiculous.

Thus, as in all other authoritative situations, example closes the circle of prescribed duties, and its influence on subordinate stations is almost invincible. You rarely see the master and mistress of a family distinguished for propriety and goodness, without observing that the servants exhibit the aspect of decency and order. When the heads of the house are dissipated, riot and profligacy reign in the kitchen; the extravagance of the lady is reflected by her myrmidons. Is she absurdly æmulous of her

superiors; does she launch into expences merely because she cannot bear to be outdone; you will generally find that every female in her house is a tawdry beggar, and intimately acquainted with the *internal* regulations of a pawn-broker's shop. On the other hand, is the mistress contented in her station, œconomic, industrious, domestic, and prudent, the servants will not be gadders and gossips; their appearance will be plain; their manners regular; they will find amusement in their occupations, and the song of cheerfulness will carol to the wheel of diligence.

Nor is the benefit of a good example confined within the walls of our own dwelling. To you, my dear young friend, who are by birth appointed to that most enviable of all situations a country gentlewoman, I can with peculiar applicability point out the beneficial consequences of

prudence, gentleness, decent respect to your own rank, kind attention to the wants and comforts of others, and regard to religious duties, as reflected in the appearance of a village which looks up to you as its standard of right. Happy would it be for this kingdom, if *influence* were always as happily exerted in favour of *moral* improvement!

The virtue of charity has been so often commended in the course of our correspondence, that I shall only briefly mention it in this letter. Benevolence is certainly a prime part of our duty to our inferiors. Happily it is not overlooked in this kingdom. In our laudable endeavours for bettering the condition of the poor, let us, however, bear in mind two considerations, which ever ought to guide the liberal hand of *unsparing* beneficence: I mean that we should never excite the insatiable appetite of *improper refinement*,

and beware of encouraging that *perpetual dependence* on our aid which weakens the moral stimulus from which industry and provident care for the future are derived. It is in these particulars that the poor of this kingdom are placed in a *worse* situation than their ancestors. Parochial relief, though it is their only bulwark against absolute want that has yet been discovered, seldom fails to injure the character of those who frequently claim it. Hence the incalculable superiority of every plan which proposes to preserve the poor from distress, over those which barely tend to prevent them from sinking under its galling pressure.

As far, therefore, as the influence of any lady can extend, let her be the patroness of industry and frugality, the rewarder of merit, and the enemy of immorality. Let her acquaint herself with the *real* wants of the family which she

means to serve, before she takes them out of their own hands, and teaches them to depend upon her assistance. To this end, she should (as has been before observed) know what they have it in their power to earn, what sum is necessary for their *subsistence*, what for *support*, what for *indulgence*. The thrifty earth does not produce her delicacies in sufficient redundance to allow all her offspring to partake of them; but when the relish has not been acquired, this privation is not painful. The increasing opulence of every *ascending* rank proportionably increases care, responsibility, and indulgence. It is our duty to remember this, both in respect to those above and those beneath us. If we encourage indolence, or foster unreasonable appetites, our benevolence makes us bad citizens. Age, infirmity, sickness, unprotected infancy, widowhood, and imbecility, have a right to pecuniary

aid; and what we give to extravagance, idleness, or dissolute morals, is in fact taken from these just claimants.

To discharge our duty well in the relative stations of life, ample fortunes or superior information are not necessary. The widow's mite was accepted and *recorded*; to "a cup of cold water," given on christian motives, is promised a reward. Out of her little barrel of meal and scanty cruse, the Zidonian widow maintained the exiled prophet of God. They who confine their notions of benevolence to the *overflowings* of wealth, forget that christian charity is founded on *self-denial*.

These remarks, my dear miss M——y are not necessary to you; but the times require them. The equalizing spirit of the age, and the abundant largesses which wealth unsparingly bestows, induce the poor to set little value upon the assistance

which *limited frugality* can *prudently* afford. The ingratitude and extravagance of the lower orders are therefore frequently urged, by those who have not much to bestow, as a reason for reserving that little to their own use. The rapacity of self-indulgence must, however, be checked; the positive command of our Master must not be forgotten, nor his own example of tender pity to the ungrateful overlooked. If we should really be so unfortunately situated as to know no object who deserves or requires our aid, let us then remember that we can further the beneficial purposes of public charity. We are ourselves naked and hungry, unless we are adorned and fed by the riches of God's mercy. We are commanded "to do good, and to be ready to "communicate to those who are in "need." We are also enjoined to keep our own bodies in subjection; and we

shall never avoid indulging ourselves in sinful propensities, unless we are accustomed to the wholesome discipline of moderating or denying our innocent desires. If we permit ourselves to plead experienced ingratitude, as a reason for abstaining from the duty of benevolence, we shall become in every sense of the word uncharitable, selfish, implacable, uncandid, and petulant, full of envy, swollen with pride, haughty, and vain-glorious, without kindly affections to our brother man, and unthankful to God. How detestable is such a character, and how intimately has our blessed Master united *duty* with *respectability and true enjoyment!*

I remain, my dear miss M——,

Ever faithfully yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

On the Duties of declining Life and old Age.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

We have considered the sphere of general utility in which Providence designed that our sex should move. We have investigated the oblique paths in which the frailty of our nature, and the strong inducements of external temptations, have frequently made us wander; and we have also reviewed our general and relative duties as christians, as rational creatures, as the wives, and mothers of the human race, and as the regulators of domestic comfort and family order. We seem now to have conducted the female cha-

racter to that stage of life which requires and deserves tranquillity and repose. Yet even hither the obligations of duty and usefulness accompany us; nor indeed do they quit us on this side the grave, unless we are destined to hang suspended over its brink, stretched on the couch of *bedridden inanity.* Let no one, therefore, suppose that because the decline of life is generally less crowded with busy occupations, we may devote it without hesitation to selfish enjoyment.

" For better purposes to favour'd man
" Is length of days, tremendous blessing, given;
" To regulate our life's disorder'd plan,
" And purify the blemish'd soul for heaven.
" How blest who thus, by added years improv'd,
" With cautious steps their lengthen'd journey tread,
" And, from the task of sultry life remov'd,
" Converse with wisdom in its ev'ning shade!"

Mrs. Carter's Poems.

A few reflections on the reciprocal obligations of youth and age, and on the occupations of declining life, shall conclude a correspondence in which I flatter myself the pleasure and improvement have been mutual. By analysing the faults of others, *I* have furnished myself with better armour against my own errors; and the subject that I am about to discuss leads me to think, that the counsels of experience may occasionally have relieved *you* from the incertitude of youthful timidity.

The primary duties of declining life are certainly due to our own family, and those remnants of friendship and early connexion which death, or the vicissitudes of fortune, still permit us to retain; for this is not the period to extend our acquaintance and enlarge our circle, when we feel ourselves daily less capable of slowly pacing a *circumscribed* round.

Our first preparation for decent retreat is, to let the strictness of maternal authority gradually subside into affectionate friendship. When the judgment of a young person has so far ripened as to become adequate to the common purposes of life, the mother will do well to change command into counsel, and positive prohibition into reason and argument. The period between adolescence and maturity seems to be the age in which we should attempt to govern by influence, and to direct the understanding rather by insinuation than decisive control. As years advance, the cord of restraint should continue to be slackened; and in proportion to this relaxation, the ties of affection and esteem should, if possible, be strengthened, till attachment and habit have formed the *inviolable cement* of maternal and filial friendship. This surely never can be promoted by inverting the natural order

so long sanctioned by experience. A contending infant must certainly make a pert child, a froward girl, and an insolent daughter. The complaints which parents in declining life frequently make of the neglect and unkindness of their children, are mostly ascribable to their own bad management; they indulged and humoured them when they *ought to have had them in subjection*; and then expected to govern them when habit had engendered stubbornness, and custom *acknowledged and justified* their claim to self-government.

The mother who has preserved the affections of her children, and brought them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," has made the richest provision for her declining years; and she may then with propriety begin to relieve her own shoulders from the burthen of worldly care. Our sex is charged with

finding it very difficult to *grow old* when they *ought*; and the beauty of a daughter is said to be never thoroughly admired by a mother who piqued herself upon her early loveliness. There is some truth in this charge; but the picture of a faded toast covering her gray locks with false hair, brightening her dim eyes with a large portion of rouge, exposing her shrivelled person, imitating in her girlish titters and jaunty step the vivacity of youth, and looking around to see if she has withdrawn admiration from those fair blossoms of unassisted nature which bloom beauteous at her side, is so irresistibly ludicrous, that I should hope the general inclination to laugh at such gross folly makes people often accuse maternal vanity, when the sprightly matron only intended to pave the way for the *daughter's* conquests.

This view of the world has made me

lament the indispensable necessity of chaperons for spinsters who have passed the age of juvenile indiscretion; supposing that it must be miserable, for ladies in the autumn of their days to be compelled to pass not merely their midnight but their morning hours also, in the fatiguing scenes of public amusement and private dissipation, as often as any *unmarried* friend solicited them to forego those comforts of rest and repose which must be so much more congenial to declining strength and impaired health. Above all, I have lamented the absolute necessity of their adopting the chilling costume, without which, I suppose, it is *impossible* for them to be admitted within the precincts of fashion. Contemplating the mournful list of diseases dire, catarrhs, asthmas, rheumatics, palsies, &c. to which decaying fabrics are more exposed, and *feeling* the comforts of fleecy hosiery and warm wrap-

pings, I have had the presumption to suppose that a general *insurrection* of middle-aged ladies, in defence of the privileges suited to their years, might procure them a charter to authorise their wearing sleeves, petticoats, and handkerchiefs. As for *old* women, it will not be necessary to put in any saving clauses on their account; for in genteel life the order is *extinct*. With this very humble effort to serve the idol they worship, self (which on that account will, I trust, be kindly received), I make my farewel curtsey to "the fashionable world;" among whose virtues I gratefully acknowledge the gay good-humour, and polite nonchalance, with which it endures censure, defies reproach, and even enjoys a satire on its own vices that promises to kill time; thus leaving to myself, and the industrious tribe to whom I belong, the *ever-new* delight of pointing out its vices and absurdi-

ties. I will address the remainder of this letter to a less *incorrigible* order of beings.

To the gradual abdication of maternal authority, a progressive resignation of superfluous ornaments of dress and pleasurable pursuits should be added. I do not mean that this dereliction should proceed to total negligence or entire seclusion; but that, in the former case, we should forbear to set "an odorous "chaplet of sweet summer buds on "the icy brow of Hyem," because every tittering girl will discover that it is done "in mockery;" and in the latter instance, that we should sit so loose to active enjoyment, as most willingly to relinquish a place at a party of pleasure, to gratify the longings of sanguine youth; nay, that we should bri[illegible]r minds to such a state, as to receive more satisfaction from the recapitulation of such scenes, when described

by a daughter or a niece, than the being an eye-witness could have communicated. This is not supposing or recommending an untimely or entire renunciation of the world. While we continue to have the charge of young daughters, we must, most unquestionably, for their sakes, mix in its more festive scenes as often as prudence and propriety enjoin that they should enjoy those amusements, which it is necessary our presence should sanction. The absurd laws of fashionable life require matrons to initiate single ladies in *continual* dissipation; there seems also to be an *opposite error* in the middle classes permitting their grown girls to go *every where*, without the least restriction from the presence of a mother or staid relation, who would not only prevent the impertinent advances of forward pretenders, but also check those ebullitions of volatile spirits which are apt to hurry the

possessor into extravagance, if not into vice. The evils that arise from neglected infancy are comparatively trivial, to the consequences which must ensue from suffering youth to run its headlong course unadmonished and unobserved. A significant glance from a maternal eye may prevent a thousand improprieties; nip a dangerous intimacy in its bud; correct a vivacity, which, though resulting from innocence, is often ascribed to improper levity; and extricate a heedless inexperienced girl from embarrassments, with which it would be impossible for her to contend self-supported.

But, though our appearance in *public scenes* of amusement should rather depend upon the wishes and necessities of others than on our own, as long as our health and faculties will permit us to add to the pleasures of social intercourse, I would advise my sex not to give them-

selves up to *total seclusion.* If they can bring good-humour and cheerfulness into company, they may be assured that their presence will be a valuable addition to its delights. There are very few young people who would not love the society of their seniors, provided they were treated with kindness, and condescending attention to the propensities and errors incident to their age. The trite rule, that old people should remember they were young, and the young should consider that if they live they will be old, is quite sufficient to establish the commerce of different ages on an agreeable footing. Let us picture to ourselves the wisdom of declining years removing the doubts and confirming the judgment of youthful inexperience; and receiving, in return, those exhilarating supplies of vivacity and amusement which its exhausted spirits often require. Does not this

idea present to the mind one of the most amiable and valuable portraits of social life, exercised in the beneficent offices of relieving the mutual wants of humanity? Let us take sound sense and good temper for the characteristics on one side, and let modesty and sprightliness predominate on the other; affection, and a desire to serve and to please, must be mutual; and surely a friendship that is founded on an equality of years can hardly furnish so many essential requisites for happy and improving intercourse.

To increase the effect of its admonitions, age should always place its superiority in a true light; it being an adventitious and relative, not an inherent distinction. If, while we obliquely lecture the extravagancies of youth, we glance occasionally at our "own salad days," when we also "were green in

judgment," we shall greatly abate the *offensiveness* of prescription. The narrative of our mischances, proceeding either from the want or the neglect of *instruction*, will persuade our hearers of the integrity of our intentions in bestowing *it* upon them; and they will be contented not to be wise before their time, provided we yield them the empire which youth and beauty may claim with propriety, and do not require them to listen to us as to beings who are exempt from error. The sombre colours in which we must occasionally depicture life, in order that we may check the extreme avidity of youthful pursuit, and the ardour of sanguine expectation, will appear more natural, if we direct their recollection to the images that occupied their minds in their childish days, and the little relish they now have for the enjoyments which then seemed impossi-

I have spoken of vivacity as the distinguishing feature of youth; but it by no means follows, that age ought to adopt the sober uniform of tristful melancholy. If it prefer the attire of gravity, let that decorous garb resemble the robe of "the starr'd Ethiop queen," and be studded over with lucid spangles. I grant, the sportive train of Euphrosyne, who "trip on the light fantastic toe," would be rather inconvenient partners to those who limp through the vale of years; but, *if possible*, let cheerfulness conduct us to life's latest stage. There is something delightfully exhilarating in the sportive good-humour of an agreeable old woman. I have even seen assumed coquetry appear infinitely engaging, when it was adopted to correct and instruct a grand-daughter. You observe, I speak of an *affected*, not a real flirtation; and I premise that the actor had

a *moral* purpose. When cheerfulness struggles with disease and hopeless infirmity, she presents us not merely an amiable but a sublime object: for now, my dear miss M——, can we better estimate the power of religion, than when we perceive that it enables the soul to emerge from the ruins of its earthly tabernacle, not only without terror, but with a serene complacence almost amounting to exultation?

I believe mental energy and bodily activity are the best medical recipes that have been discovered to retard the progress of physical decay. When the wish of repose increases upon us, we should exercise our judgment, to distinguish whether it is the *positive* call of nature, or the cravings of self-indulgence; and as we value the enjoyment of our remaining days, we must comply with the former, and combat the latter.

Let us apply to the employments that most interest us as long as possible, and decline the assistance of others as long as we are able to perform little offices for ourselves. To "live all the days of our lives," in a *rational*, not a *Bacchanalian* sense, is most desirable; for our mortal existence is a burden, and not a blessing, when the spring of the mind, as well as the sinews of the body, is broken down, and feeble dependence is constrained to lean on extraneous support. In such a state we may and must continue, if it be the will of God, till he separates impatient age from its load of drossy alloy, and purifies it into ethereal mind. But surely it must be a sensible aggravation to the miseries of those who thus drink the bitter dregs of life, to have their scanty share of recollection filled with the consciousness, that indolence and self-indulgence have *prematurely* brought

on those years in which they feel there is no pleasure.

Another preventive to growing old before our time is, to avoid incurring those habits which will drive us to our own bed-chambers, and, what is still worse, confine us to the society of interested dependence. I have mentioned cheerfulness and good-humour as the credentials which will ever procure admittance into good company. To preserve our title to these, we must watch against those notions and habits which are apt to predominate when disappointment and lassitude have prepared the wearied mind for misanthropy, or at least rendered it indifferent to surrounding objects. It is certainly extremely desirable, that we should not be too much attached to what we must soon relinquish? Yet, on the other hand, if we cut the knots which bind us to the world faster than nature

unties them, we *excoriate* instead of *liberating* our hearts; and there is more probability of their becoming cankered o'er with spleen, than that they will be so purified as to render them a willing and acceptable offering to God. If we seclude ourselves from society further than our religious duties, our infirmities, or the decorums due to our age, justify, we shall not think more *wisely* than our neighbours, but more *austerely*. We shall look on errors as crimes, and turn dissimilarity of opinion into error. If our intercourse is chiefly limited to those who dare not contradict us, we shall infallibly become dogmatical and opinionated; and our tenacity, instead of giving sanction to the purity of our principles and the rectitude of our conduct, will render even our wisdom and virtue forbidding and disgusting. They who would reform the world (and

who so proper for the undertaking "as "the hoary head, when it is found in "the paths of righteousness?") should remember the apostolical rule of becoming "all things to all men, that by any "means they might gain some." The uncomplying aspect of steril stern reproof is ill adapted to the office of persuasion. If we require youth to sacrifice its inclinations and passions to our admonitions, we must take especial care that its attention shall not be *diverted* from its own improvement, by the irresistible inducement of an *obvious retort*, which our own petulance or positiveness has deserved, and rendered but too applicable.

But notwithstanding all these heroical endeavours to delay as long as we can the period of our playing nobody in the drama of life, the time commonly at length arrives when our excursions cannot extend far beyond our own fire-

sides, and our limited observations must be contented with the confined amusements which the domestic circle affords us. Happy they who at this, or indeed at any other period of declining life*, possess the luxurious enjoyment of long-established well-proved friendship! Age is always said to be garrulous; and how can this propensity be so delightfully gratified, as in the society of one with whom we can discuss those scenes of early life which are viewed with tenfold interest, and glow with more vivid colours, when descried through the *softening* perspective of time? When memory begins to fail, it resembles the telescope; near objects and late events are but dimly discerned, and make a faint impression; while expatiating on those which are remote, it magnifies them into distinctness and splendour. Hence the conver-

* See Letter xi.

sation of aged people generally consists in tales of past times; and if they are faithful chroniclers, an intelligent auditor will always listen to them with delight: but the pleasure of the relater is exquisitely increased, when a venerable cotemporary is at hand to confirm the narrative, or to elucidate it with additional circumstances.

But though an *occasional* companion of our own age, especially such a one with whom we can renew the endearments of ancient friendship, is highly gratifying; if the pressure of infirmities be very *severe*, it rarely happens that the comfort of old people is really increased by *residing* together, unless they have done so from an earlier period of life. In the last stages of our existence, habit becomes extremely tenacious; acquiescence is painful; anguish and wearisomeness can ill spare those attentions

which humanity to the infirmities, and observance of the wants, of our companions require; and it is justly observed, "that two groaning people make a "miserable concert." Hence we may discover the value of that benevolence which unites the different ages as well as ranks in society; and surely there cannot be a greater proof of real goodness of heart in those who are blessed with a full enjoyment of their faculties, than when they devote their leisure intervals to divert the gloom that must ever intrude on the doleful sameness of decrepitude. This was a distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman whom you have often heard me applaud and lament. With talents which obtained distinction in the most learned societies, with such natural and acquired elegance as favoured his admittance into the most polished company, his *christianized* spirit often led

him to prefer those *untrodden* paths, where he could expect to meet with no other entertainment than the grateful welcome of infirmity, and the gratulations of his own approving conscience. For these and all his other good deeds, we may trust, he is now enjoying the foretaste of his future eternal recompense, in the society of prophets and martyrs, and of the spirits of wise "and just men made perfect, "amid the church of the first-born." Happy will it be, if the fair memorial that he has left behind him of virtues and talents shall excite the emulation of such as now shrink with fantastical horror from those duties in which his exalted mind found the most exquisite satisfaction*. But to return.

* A faint sketch of this gentleman's character may be met with in The Guardian of Education, vol. iii. p. 242. It is also the subject of a monody, entitled Lycid, in the 3d vol. of this author's Poetry.

When protracted life has attained the period of which we are now treating, a relinquishment of worldly concerns becomes necessary. To do this, requires great strength of mind and command of temper; for what is so difficult as to part with long-cherished habits of praise-worthy exertion, and, after we have been accustomed to lead and direct others, to be obliged to submit to be led and directed, perhaps in a method which is *distasteful* to ourselves? The Saviour of the world points out this circumstance to the great apostle of the circumcision*; and though in that instance it prophetically referred to the trial of martyrdom, it may be considered as analogous to the common decrepitude of age: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst "thyself and walkedst whither thou "wouldest; but when thou shalt be old,

* John xxi. ver. 18

"thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, "and another shall gird thee, and "carry thee whither thou wouldest "not." These considerations should forcibly strike all who have the care of infirm people, whose narrow bound of enjoyments should be *sacredly* regarded, and the *few* pleasures that they can yet taste *most charily preserved.* The time will probably arrive when their own feelings will tell them that what they thought care was negligence; and if this reflection do not arise from an acute sense of the bitterness of privation, when the grave has closed on those to whom we can no longer minister, an affectionate heart will always feel that the services *which cannot be repeated* were limited and cold.

As in active minds the desire of occupation always survives the power of performance, the burden of time becomes to such insupportable, and their first and

last complaint always is, that they are now good for nothing. To remove this weighty pressure by contriving little amusements, becomes the joint duty of all who have charge of this state of second childhood; but such compassionate anticipating kindness does not exonerate the sufferers from the exercise of self control, which is as much their duty now, as it was in the early and happy period of youthful activity. "They serve who can only stand and "wait*," as much as they who fly to discharge the behests of divine Providence. When we can no longer *act*, we can yet *obey*; when we can no longer do good to our fellow creatures, we *can set them an example of resignation.* Yet how often does it happen, that decrepitude clings still closer to the world in proportion as sublunary engagements tear them-

*This sublime idea is taken from Milton's 20th sonnet.

selves from its grasp! Hence spring two dark and heavy offences, which generally gain ground "as we tend toward earth;" an attachment to that "golden snare" for which we have now so little use, and an anxiety to superintend the pecuniary concerns of our descendants even after we are consigned to the grave,—and this for as many generations as the law will *permit* us to extend our precautionary limitations. The passion of entailing and fettering their successors by whimsical and arbitrary restraints, is the last gratification of restless avarice, and generally seizes upon advanced life. Except for the purpose of *securing* property in the *right line* these restrictions are unjust, and often a fruitful source of domestic unhappiness. Unless there be cause to suspect, either from the vices or prejudices of the next heir, that the family inheritance will be *improperly* alienated, every genera-

tion should possess its natural right of managing its effects according to its own discretion. In treating of the errors which are incident to old age, it seemed requisite that I should not omit what is a very common one; though women so seldom possess the power of exercising their caprice in this way, that these admonitions in an address to my own sex appear almost supererogatory. Those who have property to bestow, should take care to perform that important duty at a time when their judgment is too sound to be influenced by other motives than justice and discretion, and before the habits of brooding reflection, constantly occupied in its own concerns, have taught them to attach importance to trifles, and made them the *slaves* of pique and prejudice, and the *dupes* of artful blandishment.

Often, at this period of life, those who have been most tenacious of govern-

ing others, and conducting their affairs by the sole consideration of their sovereign will and pleasure, become the prey of some cunning dependant; who having banished the relations and respectable connexions of their infatuated victims by crafty subservience, exercise a most uncontrolable tyranny over what they consider, in every purport of the word, *their* property; while the unhappy captives (for in that light aged persons so situated must be considered), warped in their judgments by false representations, and precluded from an intercourse with those who would direct them right, often conceive a strong attachment for the authors of this most unjust treatment. It is extremely natural to feel grateful to those who personally minister to our infirmities, and perform for us those offices which are most necessary to our comfort; but our sense of these benefits should not obli-

terate the impressions of early affection or silence the sacred voice of justice in behalf of our relations and friends, who are perhaps prevented from thus constantly attending to our wants by nearer, and therefore primary claims. Stipendiary services demand a reward in proportion to the fatigue that they occasion, or the fidelity, adroitness, and alacrity with which they are performed; but the ties of blood and early affection are sacred, and cannot be *cancelled* even by the *unworthiness* of the immediate representative, unless he has no *issue* to rescind the deserved forfeiture. Were we to put ourselves in the place of those who claim to inherit our property, we should feel the justice of these remarks; though, unquestionably, we are allowed some license as to the *proportions* in which we make our distribution, where the wants and the deserts of our legatees may be fairly considered

and if our kindred be remote, we may also, without abrogating the laws of God*, exercise the privilege of *selection*. If our obligations to our domestics are principally confined to their humouring our waywardness and flattering our foibles, it is more our business to *reform* ourselves than to *reward* them. But, unhappily, I am now preaching to ears almost as cold and dull as that of death. Enfeebled intellect and increasing obstinacy have, in this state of humiliated mortality, barred the mind against the admission of reason, especially if it approach in the shape of a monitor. But since (like what was supposed to be the case of the provident ant) we ought to secure

* For the Jewish law of inheritance, see Numbers xxvii. ver. 6.; which law is exemplified in the xxxvith chapter. Though the judicial laws of Moses do not bind Christians, the civil institutions of our nation have recognised the justice of this distribution.

those stores in autumn which must support us in winter, let us among our preparations for growing old with propriety, lay up a double stock of caution against whims, peculiarities, and prejudices; and prepare an antidote for the morbid anodyne flattery, by preserving a relish for wholesome reproof, and subduing that obstinate self-attachment which alone can render the expressed juice of the noiotus creeper palatable.

It being expedient to prevent the mind as long as possible from constantly brooding over its own *narrow* concerns, or on the *mouldering* particles of its decaying associate, a relish for literature should be carefully cherished. Science and taste belong to that rank of quiet companions, who are not terrified by the appearance of an arm chair, a wrapping shawl, and solitude. Reading, as long as prudent regard to the organs of vision

will permit is a most gratifying employment to an elderly person who preserves the power of clear discrimination. But this can never be enjoyed in our declining years, unless the taste for it has been early acquired. Hence arises the advantage of extending our youthful studies as far as our abilities and leisure will permit; for though, in the busy scenes incident to the middle of our existence, there may be but few opportunities for indulging this appetite, it will revive at the season of retired privacy, and form one of the most delightful interruptions to the sameness of solitude.

It has been often observed, that improvement can never take place at a late period in life; and the age of forty-five was (as you well know) determined to be the *remotest* period of amelioration. Many instances might however be given, of great mental attainments after that age;

and I think moral and religious cultivation never goes on more rapidly, than when we *drive* our ploughs *down hill.* But to continue the allusion in another point of view; though as long as the sun of intellect continues to shine, the harvest of thought will increase in ripeness and value; those who neglected to sow the seeds of reflection till the end of summer, must never expect to reap their mature produce. Just as the green blade shoots forth the *scithe of death,* or the *frost of oblivious infirmity,* will cut down the hopes of the indolent husbandman who slumbered during the proper season of toil.

Permit me in this place to indulge in a few reflections, which though not adapted to general use, force themselves upon my mind with irresistible urgency: I fear however, that they savour strongly of egotism. Beside the termination of our mortal ex-

istence to which all look forward, the close of a literary career presents many serious considerations to those who have experienced its delights and its pains. These principally proceed from those acute sensibilities which while they invigorate fancy and quicken observation, *particularly* expose the possessor to feel "the rubs and flouts," "the proud man's contumely," and "all the scorns which merit" must ever experience, not only from "the unworthy" but from competitors in the race of fame, from misconceived opinions, from severe censure and from that capriciousness of popular opinion which frequently withholds its praise where labour and ingenuity alike claimed attention; and bestows that celebrity and emolument on a well-turned *jeu d'esprit*, an appropriate tale, or a local satire, which the writer of a profound thesis vainly contemplated, and soothed

his painful labours with the hope of enjoying.

Yet, notwithstanding that none but a writer can *guess* a writer's pains, the visits of fancy, or the scintillations of investigation, are so delightful, that their absence must leave a void in the mind when they cease to illuminate it, which is more dreary than what is created by the cessations of ordinary occupations. It will, however, be advisable for the possessors of these treasures, to look forward to the gradual relinquishment of delights so justly dear; and as nothing is more unlikely than that we should be able to appreciate our own decay,—it seems advisable, at that period of life when judgment usually becomes defective, to accustom ourselves to an increased reliance on the opinions of others, whom we should encourage to frankness and candour by a ready acknowledgment of infirmity. The pro-

ductions of even valuable authors in old age seldom fail to diminish their reputation, and often only present a mournful picture of *stubborn infirmity* scorning to yield to the inevitable lot of humanity. It is more melancholy to see respectable talent burying itself alive beneath the ponderosity of its own loquaciousness, than when injudicious friendship, by its frivolous and bustling industry, contrives, like Falstaff, to murder some defunct Hotspur of the Parnassian field *with his own sword.* The timely destruction of all manuscripts which unclouded judgment determines to be unworthy of publication, would prevent this posthumous homicide; and the friendly counsels of some *faithful* Lucius may snatch back the hand of Cato before it signs the deed of *self*-slaughter.

Authors, after they have withdrawn from the field of literary enterprise, may

still be most usefully employed. The examination of former labours, if not in a critical or philological, at least in a moral point of view, will become not only an amusement, but a solemn preparation for another world. In this respect, the children of literature seem more responsible than the rest of mankind: death can scarcely be said to put the seal to their actions; for, if they possess celebrity, their good or bad works continue to operate in the world long after the authors have ceased to prepare the poison, or to compound the antidote. To re-examine what they have penned, to analyse the consequences of all their tenets, at least to see that the general result cannot encourage vice, weaken the principles, vitiate the fancy, or warp the judgment of posterity, is an office which reflection teaches us is right, and religion therefore *requires* us to perform. If they discover

any thing erroneous, they should diligently use the yet remaining light that their wasting taper affords to repair what is amiss. Perhaps the acknowledgment of error is the only reparation that they can make; and if they cannot exscind from their works the passages which they now feel to be objectionable, they may at least take some public method to refute them. "To err is human;" to confess error, though not "divine," is the nearest approach that conscious fallibility can make to perfection.

Something, possibly, may also be required by society individually considered. In the heat of controversy, they may have spoken injuriously of their opponents, or they may have dressed opposite opinions in false colours. Satire may have hurried them into calumny, or prepossession may have shed a delusive brilliancy around a worthless object. In these par-

ticulars, whatever is wrong should be remedied by frank confession, as well as all other notions which experience, or increased information, shall convince them were erroneous.

Supposing the rare case, that reason should still reign in unclouded majesty, while nature wastes by gentle, imperceptible, and easy decay; and that our affections were not agonized by those losses which often embitter protracted life, or those cares for immediate provision which must be severely felt by *increasing* wants struggling with *limited* means; we can hardly picture a more happy state than such a serene, quiet, and, let me add, independent old age. The enjoyments of youth have always a degree of feverish passion annexed to them, which produces too much trepidation for lasting delight. The pleasures of mature age are interrupted by fears and cares; in either state, exquisite sensations of pain and pleasure

tread closely upon each other, and the soul is alternately lifted high, and low ingulphed, like a vessel in a storm. But when the passions are subdued by time; when desire is weakened by long experience of the unsubstantial nature of earthly enjoyments; when the certainty of the shortness of our stay on earth *abates* our anxiety for the duration of what we still possess; when in the retrospect of our past days we discover no fearful record of unrepented misdeeds; when we still retain that best part of us, the intellectual faculty, in full perfection, strengthened by the well digested treasures of our early days, and capable of the improvement which leisure and inclination still promise to afford; when, to the progressive satisfactions of increased perception, the duties of charity and the visions of faith are superadded,—surely this is to lead the life of angels even while on earth.

May we not acquire a faint image of its exquisite serenity, by comparing it to the cool *refreshing calm* of a beautiful summer's evening, when the *exhausting* heat of the day has subsided? Let us suppose ourselves stationed in a pleasant garden, refreshed with odoriferous breezes, soothed by the murmurs of a distant rivulet, or the soft tones of a flute mellowed by intervening waters. Here, while the labour which we lately underwent renders the repose that we now enjoy more balsamic; while our refreshing faculties awaken with new energy to contemplation or imagination; while every pulse "makes healthful music," and every sense conveys delight to the soul; does not our satisfaction increase from the reflection that our toil is finished, and the hour of lawful repose arrived? Such, I conceive, must be the feelings of healthful, intelligent, contented, and pious old age. The

hope of living thus happily and wisely for *ourselves*, when dissevered ties no more enjoin us to live to *others*, solaces the fatigue attendant on anxious and incessant employment.

Is there, however, a period in human life when we *really* are released from the obligation of being useful to our fellow creatures?—Surely none. Let us therefore rather look forward to *relaxation*, than to *absolute* rest.

The pleasures of very advanced life must chiefly spring from recollection; and if the faculties are not much impaired, a retrospect of our past lives will afford us a salutary and agreeable amusement. We must not, however, place full confidence in the conclusions which we shall then form of the real value of life. If youth is apt to be too precipitate in its decisions, and too sanguine in its views, slow and saturnine

age is not more uniformly just in its conclusions.

Seen through the vista of expected years,
Life cheats our hopes with glories not its own;
Each glittering vane a golden tower appears,
And every rock a temple or a throne;
While the dim sight of melancholy time
Involves the prospect in unnatural gloom,
And the fond idols of our days of prime
Change to a toy, a shipwreck, or a tomb.

Here then, as in early life, we shall need a guide to correct the false views which prejudice is apt to impose upon us; and where shall we apply, but to that never-failing friend to whose counsels, it is to be hoped, our youth has been deeply indebted; I mean to *religion*; and chiefly to the sacred volume in which she speaks in her own genuine and authoritative language? As this is the most proper of all books for those who have wandered far into the vale of years, it is ear-

nestly to be hoped that we shall not fail to apply to what must be our chief source of consolation. The necessity of acquiring a relish for such studies at an early period is obvious, by considering that whoever neglects to learn the laws by which they must be judged, till their opportunities of obeying them are past, can have no pretensions to the reward of a *faithful servant*, whatever hope they may cherish to obtain forgiveness as a *bankrupt debtor*; for their obedience must have been accidental; and therefore unmeritorious. Nor can their minds be enlarged to the comprehension of scripture doctrines, so as to receive *solid* consolations from them, if they never entered upon the study, till their dull and blunted faculties were no longer capable of attending to worldly concerns, though habit had long familiarized their ordinary routine.

The study of the holy scriptures will correct the false views which melancholy and misanthropy are too apt to exhibit to those who quarrel with a world which they have really loved too well, and whose dissatisfaction is rather occasioned by grudging their sons the relics of the feast, or by the loss of their own appetite, than from any real conviction of the unsuitableness of the entertainment which they have been forced to quit. The only just estimate of our existence is, that it is a scene of probation and trial, in which much is to be *suffered* and *performed* under the guidance of hope and patience, and much to be *enjoyed* under the tuition of moderation and gratitude. Man, the chief actor in this motley drama, is neither a dæmon nor an angel; for the attributes of either character, exclusively bestowed, would have made him unfit for the task

which has been assigned him; and thus we should unwisely bring the righteousness of God into question. Man is a being endowed with *free will*, or else he could not be *responsible*; he has great frailties, or in what would the merit of that virtue which cannot fall consist? He requires correction, or how can we reconcile the afflictions that he suffers with the attributes of a just God? He has powerful encouragements and assistances to enable him to vanquish the temptations to which he is exposed, as well from the assaults of his spiritual enemy, as from his own evil inclinations. Subduing his erroneous propensities, and cultivating his nobler properties, constitute his best employment in this state of warfare and exercise; but as all his efforts must fall infinitely short of his Creator's holiness, the merciful expedient of a Redeemer has been provided,

in whose merits and mediation he may *securely*, but not *supinely*, trust. Being compounded of seemingly discordant materials, matter and spirit, corruptibility and incorruptibility, sensuality and intellect, the body, which his better self inhabits, also requires his attention: hence spring all the obligations of justice, temperance, benevolence, and industry; and thus every chasm of existence becomes filled with appropriate duties; by neglecting which, he delivers himself into the power of his enemies; for idleness is the mother of sin, and sin the parent of death. Hence spring the duties of every period of life, and hence the trials to which all are exposed.

But our estimate of life can never be just, unless we enlarge our views to eternal existence, of which religion (or I should rather say Christianity) affords us the only *substantial* and *definite* pro-

spect. A future state of rewards and punishments smooths all the inequalities of this life, and affords to faltering virtue the only encouragement that can enable her to endure to the end. Among the conclusions respecting futurity which revelation permits us to indulge, it seems apparent that the blessed will never more experience fear or hope. Fear, we all know, is torture; but we are so indebted to hope for our sublunary pleasures, that we seem unwilling to part with so exhilarating a companion. Hope may be considered as one of the strongest *internal* evidences of our immortality; for when did human enjoyment ever realize the visions sketched by her fairy pencil? When have we found the good that we long toiled to possess, afford us such delight as we expected? Hope reminds us therefore, of our immortal origin, by continually directing

our views to the *future*, because, like Noah's dove, she can find no *sure footing* in this world, unwashed by the waves of affliction. But she will properly leave us at the entrance of the world to which she conducts us, because there the *present* affords such entire delight, that the mind is filled with the idea of immediate good, and wants nothing to confirm its bliss, but the certainty of its endless duration; which resting on the sure promise of omnipotence, is liable to no uncertainty.

When we are assured that at some distant period we must remove to a remote region, from whence we shall never return, and with which we are totally unacquainted, prudence teaches us to make all the inquiries that we can respecting its laws, and produce, and inhabitants, that we may endeavour to prepare ourselves for the habits and accommodations

which we shall there meet with. But when we stand at the very *bourn* of this country, our interest in these discoveries increases tenfold, and our diligence to prepare ourselves for our new habitation seems likely to engross *all* our thoughts. But since, in the case of exchanging the visible for the unseen world, we must wait "till "we are summoned to pass the separating waters;" and since we are also assured, that to perform our duty here is our passport to the mansions of bliss; we must not, even in the last stage of life, so look on things eternal as to forget things temporal. This error is too rare to need much dissuasive admonition. Our offences are chiefly on the other side; and life even appears more attractive to most people when they know that they hold it by the slightest tenure.

To counteract this weakness, and to

subdue the selfishness which is so natural to age, let the lively feelings of benevolence be carefully cherished. "I would attach myself to a tree or "a plant," are, I think, the words of an amiable writer, "rather than exist "without some object to excite the "tender affections." Probably it is from an idea of this kind, that elderly people often keep some fondled pet, whom they cherish with ridiculous endearments. We must pardon such habits in those who live alone, and have no near object of attachment on whom they may more properly lavish their caresses; but when our immediate descendants or collateral branches can supply us with prattling infancy or sprightly youth, to exercise our tender feelings, we seem both unjust and unwise if we prefer irrational society. The advantages which age can afford to youth have been already remarked; they are

not wholly limited to the period of *exertion*; as long as we can *show* an example of patience and piety, we are useful to the rising generation; and the consciousness of being so, must impart a serene gratification.

In proportion as the wants of our nature increase, our sensibility to our fellow-sufferers should enlarge. If aches and pains prevent us from sleeping even upon down, if we shiver with cold under the warm envelope of furs and fleeces, what must they do whose equal infirmities are exposed to musty straw and tattered wretchedness? If nourishing food and balsamic cordials can hardly keep "the wheel turning round at the cistern," how must the *faint heart falter* which lacks the stimulant of necessary sustenance! Is it not strange, that unfeeling avarice should so often mark the extreme of life, while the faithful re-

remembrancers of compassion speak in every agonized feeling and languid sensation?

Combined with liberality to the pecuniary distresses of others, is the exercise of candour, forbearance, and gentleness; virtues extremely necessary, but most hard to practise, in declining life. Considering what many people *then* endure, asperity and petulance seem pardonable frailties; and in that light, they should ever be considered by those whose *duty* it is to attend upon infirmity. But the sufferers themselves will ever act wisely by striving against those indulgences of humour, which, like all other indulgences, *increase* the evil they seem to relieve. Infirmity cannot be benefited by spleen, envy, or moroseness; on the contrary, whatever robs us of the sympathy and affection of our fellow-creatures increases our misery. But the

only *perfect* defence against the temptations which so forcibly beset us in declining life, is resignation to the will of God. He who gives, has a manifest right to resume; and shall we not meekly bend to his dispensations, when we know that he has promised to restore our temporal losses tenfold in a better world!

Thus the bitter ingredients which render the dregs of life unpalatable continue to be medicinal. The loss of friends, the deprivation of faculties, the abridgment of enjoyments, all become useful preparatives, and *lighten* us for our journey. How dreadful is death to those who are in the prime of health and strength, and are cut off at the *commencement* of what promised to be a prosperous and happy life! But when the king of terrors seizes on a victim whom affliction has disrobed and prepared for his dart, his approach is not

only *welcomed* by the sufferer, but all who witness the blow pronounce it to be merciful. To contemplate the advantages which they have derived from past trials, seems to be one of the most suitable employments of old age. How often will they have reason to exult at the *disappointments* which crossed their youthful desires, and to bless the *privations* which rent their agonized hearts! The beneficial purposes of misfortune cannot be immediately perceived. A child, when he is corrected, feels the punishment, but not the advantage of those improvements which punishment impels him to acquire. So, while we sink under the pressure of sorrow, our down-cast eyes are never raised so high as to discern that good will spring out of evil, even if we are so far improved in piety as to confess that our griefs proceed from an all-wise God and merciful Father. But when we look at

our trials through the distance of intervening years, we can generally discern some good purpose which they immediately answered: and if this be the case with our *finite* powers of discrimination; if, while we "see through glass darkly," we can all of us say "it is good for us to be afflicted;" what conclusions must we form of the inestimable advantages of such discipline, when our glorified faculties are *enlarged* in a state of endless enjoyment! Surely our notions of life, as they respect the vicissitudes of fortune, will then so far change, that we shall denominate evil good and good evil.

But beside these trials, which must necessarily fall to the lot of declining age, it often happens, that some great and overwhelming affliction, some dreadful deprivation or change of circumstances, assaults us at this feeble period; and to evils of this kind the female sex is more

peculiarly exposed. These are, however, felt more severely in the autumn of our days, than in the last years of life. The tree is most likely to be *overset* when it is loaded with its verdant honours; for the tempests which would have howled through its *bare and naked* branches without meeting with resistance, will overwhelm opposition. The want of a sympathetic feeling, which is so universally ascribed to age as one of its errors, is in fact a characteristic of bodily decay, and a merciful preparative for its departure hence. In those rare instances, in which the afflictions of advanced life encounter very *acute* feelings, they who have witnessed the tears and bitter wailings of hopeless infirmity must ever regret that insensibility has not dropped the veil.

At whatever period of life we endure the extreme pressure of calamity, we shall

do well to consider why we are severely afflicted. Sorrow cannot visit man but by divine permission, and for two purposes; to *prove* or to *correct* him; and both these ends are defeated, if we question instead of submitting to the blow. Repining murmurs are, in fact, rebellion against God, who may be thereby provoked either to cast us off as irreclaimable, or to humble us by still more acute chastisements. Even grief, when it becomes so immoderate as to injure our health or our temper, or absorbs our thoughts so as to disqualify us for the duties we owe to our friends and the world, is questionless a frailty, if not a sin. This consideration is very proper to women, who are too apt to attach *merit* to extreme *susceptibility*. To submit with cheerful resignation to the burden which Providence lays on us, and to improve

it to our everlasting benefit, is christian virtue. We must compassionate the faded form of grief, or the wild aspect of despair; but it is fortitude, "the nymph of the rock," and "patience with her meek arms folded "on her throbbing breast," whom we *esteem* and *venerate*.

As death is the last enemy of man, so to subdue the dread of it is the *closing labour* of a pious christian; and doubtless, it is to expedite this glorious achievement that the last scene of life is generally marked with privations and sorrows. Our friends expire before us, to teach us how to die; our powers of enjoyment decrease, to convince us that we have little to relinquish; our sphere of usefulness becomes contracted, to show us that our task in life is nearly finished. "The "time was," says the amiable Howell

writing to an old friend, " that you and " I had all the fair continent of Eu- " rope before us to range in; we have " since been confined to an island; " and now, Lincoln holds you and " London me. We must expect the " day that sickness will confine us " to our chambers, then to our beds, " and so to our graves, the dark and " silent grave, which will put a period " to our pilgrimage in this world. And " observable it is, what method nature " doth use to contract our liberty by de- " grees. But though this small bag full " of bones be so confined, yet the no- " blest part of us may then be said to be " set at liberty, when having shaken off " this slough of flesh, she mounts up to " her true country, the country of eternity, " where one moment of joy is more than " if we enjoyed all the pleasures of this " world a million of years here among the

" elements. But till our threads are " spun up, let us continue to enjoy " ourselves as well as we can." These reflections are *true wisdom.*

" You and I," he continues, " have " luckily met abroad under many meri- " dians; when our course is run here " I trust that we shall meet in a re- " gion that is above the wheel of " time, and it may be in the con- " cave of some star, if those glorious " lamps are habitable." This pleasing hope, so dear to those who humbly trust that they have many a beloved connexion among the blessed inhabitants of the unseen world, renders the memory of the friends we have lost not only " pleasingly mournful," but *delightful* and *improving.* It is sanctioned by the opinion of many of our first divines, and is implied, though not fully asserted, in scripture. Where the veil has not been drawn aside, it is pre-

sumptuous to attempt to pierce into the secret councils of God. But a humble expectation of this kind is not without effect, if it teach us to choose our friends from religious motives, and console us when we are so unfortunate as to have the bonds of virtuous attachment prematurely dissolved. Another happy use of this hope will be, to reconcile us to the irremediable stroke of death, in the expectation of its rejoining us to those whom we best loved.

To wait the approach of that event which shall for ever conceal from our eyes all that we have been *accustomed* to behold, and deliver us over to an untried and endless existence, with mingled sensibility and composure, is the enviable lot of *few*; and if even the strong and enlightened mind of Johnson faltered in this trial, what is the weakness and comparative ignorance of

woman to expect, but *extreme dismay?* We beheld in the above instance, that firm faith and habitual piety, were unable to protect the christian sage from being dejected by the apprehension of those tremendous evils which haunt the shadow of that dark valley through which he expected soon to pass, faint and alone. To those who shudder with similar anticipations, it must be a consolation to know, that it was owing to the keen sensibility and devout humility of this admirable moralist, acting too forcibly upon a diseased and nervous frame, that he underrated his own fortitude, and feared the withdrawing of the *especial* grace of God. He *contemplated* his inevitable trial with doubt and terror; he *endured* it with magnanimity and hope. He who exclaimed, "O, my "friend! the approach of death is very "dreadful; I am afraid to think on that

"which I know I cannot avoid; it "is vain to look round and round "for that help which none can afford," found in his last hours the *full power* of the religion which he professed, and afforded another example to prove the propriety of the celebrated prayer of Balaam, "Let me die the death "of the righteous, and let my last "end be like his."

To those, however, who have had the misery to witness the desponding or excruciating exit of some dear connexion whose life gave better expectations, a few consolatory suggestions may be useful; especially since enthusiasm and sectarism are so apt to dress the death beds of their converts and promulgators with as unnatural and fantastical ornaments as Rousseau bestowed on his *foppish* Eloise. The manner of dying very much depends on the nature of the mortal disease, which often entirely over

powers the intellectual faculties by absorbing them in acute pain, distorting them by phrensy, or benumbing them by torpor and stupidity. Rapturous exclamations of joy, and clear premonitions of felicity, cannot be congenial except to the *high wrought sensibility* of martyrs and confessors; for though a pious rational christian may, when death is at some distance, hail or even invite it as a blessed release, he must, when actually struggling in its grasp, feel an indescribable awe at the consciousness of immediately approaching the presence of his God. Even if the severity of bodily anguish do not compel him to cry aloud for help and deliverance, fervent and frequent ejaculations for mercy, and ardent professions of faith and hope in the great Mediator, are surely the most suitable expressions for sinful, repentant dying man. To see our fellow-creatures

thus expire, is to behold them die the death of the righteous. When they talk of *ravishing foretastes* of joy, golden crowns, and triumphant palms, may we not too generally lament that they quit this world in a state little suited to those who are to be examined as to what they have "done in the body, whether it is good or evil," and who must render a faithful account of their thoughts, words and actions? Bishop Taylor calls a persuasion of single predestination (or as I believe it is now more generally called assurance of salvation) on a death bed, "one of the "designs of the tempter to interpose "between the end of the journey and "the reception of the crown."

We have now dropped the curtain on feeble age, and conducted it, if not in presumptuous certainty, yet in humble expectation, to the "narrow house" which its ruined frame will never quit till

" the earth and all things therein pass " away." You well know on what promises we found our hopes that it may then " burst a seraph from the tomb," possessing faculties of which the fullest enjoyment of youthful alacrity, manly vigour and sagacious experience, can give us but a *faint conception.* In a similarity to the glorified body of our Redeemer, and in the enjoyment of the beatific vision, every thing that is elevated, glorious and desirable are combined.

The review of what age requires must impress youth with two considerations; a *tender solicitude* to minister to the infirmities of those who bend under its pressure, and a *provident* forecast to lay up the necessary stores for our own wants in that dreary season. These, it is obvious, will be of two kinds, mental and bodily; the former may be diminished by acquiring a relish for those pleasures and studies

which we can enjoy alone, and which will be then sufficiently delightful to occupy our attention, when vanity and interest offer no inducements to their pursuit. But the grand intellectual cordial of old age is the remembrance of *a well spent life:* if our years of prime have been devoted to the service of God and our fellow-creatures, if we have laid up a provision of good works, steady principles, and just ideas, "the days" *never can arrive* "in which we shall have no pleasure."

The bodily wants of infirmity and weakness are a claim upon the prudence, the œconomy, and the diligence of the active portion of our existence. The means that are foolishly squandered in one part of our lives, are generally wanted at another. As comforts are more necessary than luxuries, and as it is better to *enjoy* than to *outshine*; so it is infinitely more

desirable that the evening of life should be serene, than that its morning should be brilliant. The disappointments and privations that assault us in the prime of our days may be vanquished by industry or encountered by fortitude; but age sits shivering on its frozen perch like a bird in winter, too weak to seek materials to build itself a nest, and yet unable to endure the storm. Whatever anxiety, exertion, or privation, I may endure while I have strength to sustain the burden, grant me, *kind Providence, a comfortable retreat at the last;* where I may abide, sheltered and serene, and trim my ruffled plumes at leisure, before I launch on the ocean of eternity.

And now, my dear young friend, my task is ended, and my conscience seems discharged of a debt which it has long felt, and bade me often ponder on the means of paying. *I have written to you,* whether in such a manner as your blessed

mother requested I would, I sometimes doubt; but this I know, I have in all my precepts kept her in my eye, and endeavoured to enforce those sentiments, and recommend those habits, which my intimate knowledge of her character tells me she would have approved. I may, therefore, solace myself with the thought that I have *endeavoured* to fulfil her injunction.

At the commencement of these letters, I felt discouraged at the extensiveness of the plan, for the due execution of which my numerous domestic duties left me little leisure. Whoever justly appreciates public favour, must be strongly solicitous to preserve it, and of course anxious to ward off whatever threatens its diminution. In this point I continue vulnerable, even to *timid susceptibility*. The difficulty of writing upon subjects which we have before discussed, increases with every successive composition. A desire to guard against repetition, on the one hand, obliges

us to a wearisome pursuit of novelty; and the dread of contradicting what we have before advanced, imposes a painful restraint upon invention. If, while we avoid these faults, we can also steer clear of affectation and dulness, we must esteem ourselves singularly fortunate. Writing from the dictates of my heart, and from *fixed* principles, made it less probable that I should unsay my former testimony; but the danger of disgusting my readers by endless repetition proportionably increased.

Popular applause is proverbially capricious; it is often distributed by mere chance, and frequently it is rather a casual bounty, extorted by the situation of the writer, or the subject of the work, than the just tribute which discernment pays to desert: in either of the above cases it cannot be *uniform* or *permament*. To this consideration must be added, the

certainty of meeting with that increased degree of opposition which success is sure to create. The first efforts of a young author are generally most favourably received by the public; not only from a generous desire of encouraging merit, but from the forbearance of those who are seldom inclined "to cry havoc "and let slip the dogs of war" on ignoble game, and who consequently indemnify themselves for this moderation by their more vigorous pursuit of what appears like established reputation. This temper is particularly visible, when the envy incident to authorship is stimulated by theological (I will not say by religious) differences. It is *impossible* for the liveliest imagination to *predict* what a doughty polemic will report of a work which labours to pull down the strong holds of heresy and schism. In different circles, and in different reviews, this book will probably

be styled formal and fanatical, inculcating mere worldly wisdom, and enforcing unnecessary niceties, while its author is successively termed a latitudinarian and a bigot. I could mention other general reasons which might have induced me to lie by on the shelf for the remainder of my days, beside several private causes of a depressing nature, that are connected with my peculiar situation. One of these is the loss of nearly all the friends of my early life, who encouraged or assisted my literary pursuits; and my seclusion from such society as is most apt to invigorate the intellectual faculties, which ever receive their best stimulus from the collision of active and ingenuous minds employed in similar pursuits.

Perseverance gradually lessened the difficulties which at first seemed so formidable. I found my mind gather strength in proportion as I detached it

from *useless* contemplations and *vain* regrets; and the apprehension of forfeiting the estimation in which my former labours have been kindly held (at first so formidable), was gradually weakened, under the flattering suggestion that my present work might be allowed to stand by their side, and rank with them in the warfare which the friends of decorum (I hope not unsuccessfully) maintain with "every evil word "and work." To promote the eternal welfare of our fellow creatures, is a stimulus, compared to which, all the allurements that fame and ambition ever presented are lighter in the balance than vanity itself.

I had no intention to speak of the political aspect of the times: such discussions, further than as they are connected with religion and virtue, are ill adapted to my sex or my abilities. On its *moral* features I have dwelt diffusely; and ge-

neral opinion will bear me out when I say that they are truly alarming. A very respectable authority has determined, that the danger to be apprehended from what are styled French and German principles rapidly diminishes. The bolder dogmas of those impious schools were, I believe, always too absurd and profligate for the sound sense and decorous habits of Englishmen: but it is impossible to touch pitch without being defiled; and the general rage for that pestilential literature, though it has not changed us into a nation of deists, anarchists, and reprobates, has made us indifferents and sensualists; while the cant phrases of liberty and energy, though they have not roused us to ruin the fairest fabric of government that ever human wisdom contrived, have introduced a spirit of insubordination and envy of our immediate superiors, which is visible in the delight that all

ranks feel to *outshine* and *traduce* those who are above themselves. Our commercial opulence greatly increases these faults; a restless pursuit of wealth leaves little leisure for religious attainments: hence we may trace, on one side, the alarming progress of fanaticism, which boldly and exclusively claims to itself the honours due to rational, steady, humble piety; and on the other, we see the dreadful neglect of public worship, and all that blind and timid dependance on second causes, which bespeak a people "who know not God." To these we must add that laxity of public opinion, with respect to moral turpitude, which is so alarmingly visible in the mass of local publications and general conversation. I will instance in probity and chastity, the cardinal virtues of the two sexes. To counterbalance this mass of evil in our national character, we may plead that

we still retain our ancient distinctions of courage and liberality which certainly *never were* more conspicuous than under the present severe trial.

The accusations that have been brought against our sex for contributing to, or I should rather say accelerating, the downfal of our moral fame, are of a very serious nature. It is said that we have *deserted* the station in which our Creator placed us, and that, from the help-mates, we are become the incumbrances of man. We are charged with ingrafting the worst part of the Asiatic on the British character, and with being now as *voluptuous*, but not as *submissive*, as the degraded inhabitants of the eastern harems. The word wife is considered by men as indicative of a *vehicle* for extravagant expenditure; and woman is supposed to mean a *venal bauble*, whom few can afford to purchase. It would be easy for us to recriminate on

the bad habits of the other sex; but this would produce no good effect. I fear we have too much reason to own the foibles and faults on which this severe charge is founded; and though I think the question of our superiority in comparative worth is fairly tenable, enough of blame still adheres to us to render the task of immediate reformation indispensible.

I have stated, that happiness is combined with duty; but then I spoke of happiness in a religious point of view, not as including external prosperity, or exemption from trial. I have said little of expedience; for though, in a political sense, we must connect piety and virtue to those external circumstances with which they can well incorporate, fitness and propriety are not the legitimate foundations on which we should seek to erect the massy pile of perfect holiness; for that purpose, we must select materials that are

the growth of another world. I have paid little attention to external appearance, or polite accomplishments; not because I think them unimportant, *much less* from a desire that genuine virtue should unwisely decline all *adventitious* adornings; but because the present times show no disposition to underrate these advantages. For a similar reason, I have not bestowed much labour in recommending *fashionable* virtues; I have only endeavoured to place them on their proper basis, Christianity.

I have particularly pointed my hostility at that false candour, and puling liberality, which meets with so much suspicious admiration among the teachers of the new school; who, under the pretext of introducing more exalted purity, prepare our minds for every vice, by divesting us of our natural abhorrence of what

is *sinful.* That rage for distinction and parade which infatuates the most respectable and important part of the community, and all its ridiculous appendages, of vanity, frivolity, and affectation, have called forth my severe reprehension. In fine, I have endeavoured to the *utmost* of my abilities, not only to *enforce* the domestic duties, but to *enlarge* the foundation on which they stand; and to this purpose I have employed a considerable portion of this work in elucidating the elements of christian knowledge, and recommending them to universal attention. My guide in this particular has been our *maternal church*, whom I have laboured to defend from the censures of her avowed enemies, and the charge of defection, now so strongly and unjustly urged against her by dubious brethren. My motive so to do has proceeded from my firm belief.

of her general excellence, and my conviction, founded on experience, that, next to indifference on religious points, indiscreet zeal is most fatal to individual virtue and peace of mind. Lamenting to see well-meaning people place that merit in dissent and singularity, which (except in very peculiar cases) is due to conformity and humility, I have endeavoured to rescue the Church of England from the reproaches that have been thrown upon her; and in this the labours of her best defenders have been my *revered guides.* My motive for incorporating so much of their arguments with my own connecting remarks, will, I hope, be candidly excused by their zeal for the glory of God; since it proceeded from my very sincere desire to see such important knowledge universally diffused among my own sex, who are generally fearful of reading extensive works in divinity, that

are professedly controversial and being by this diffidence kept ignorant of what can really be urged in support of the church into which they are baptized, they fall a ready prey to those preachers of dissension, who, in their zeal to make proselytes, neither respect the fundamental laws of our constitution, the privacy of domestic retirement, nor the peace of families.

To originality of design I make no pretensions I am only *one* of *many thousand labourers* who have *for ages* cultivated a fruitful field; and I disclaim every attempt to practise experimental husbandry. The scene of our toil is spacious; briers and weeds rapidly spring up; and the enemy to the Lord of the soil, not content with surreptitiously sowing tares, endeavours to introduce new modes of culture, which, under the pretence of improvements, will convert the garden of

God into a steril and naked wilderness, where the seed of immortality can never take root. Hence the necessity of additional labourers, some of whom must act as watchmen while others carry home the harvest. "Blessed are they whom "the Lord, when he cometh," shall find vigilant and faithful, speaking the words of truth with *singleness* of heart, and preferring the unchangeable approbation of God to the evanescent praise of men.

I have been so anxious to avoid omitting any reflections that seemed connected with my design, that I fear I ought to offer many apologies to the public for re-introducing some subjects under another head, which I had *previously* discussed. Whatever indulgence I may hope from the candour of my readers, or from the partiality of my friends, I anticipate many jests from the adversaries of my design (I am

not conscious of having any *personal* enemies); and the not unapt comparisons of the jog-trot of the pack-horse, and the tedious monotony of his bells, may deter many people from looking at my book, *before* they protest that they are disgusted with its *sameness*. The truth is this: the leading ideas which occupied my mind were so superlatively important, that I felt it to be my duty to bring them frequently upon the foreground, and to prove their consequence by showing their various bearings and relations. Generally speaking, they are either considerations which the present age is inclined to overlook, or else erroneous principles sanctioned by custom, or established by sophistry. In either case, my dissuasive warnings seemed to require *all* the enforcement which they could receive. Even verbal repetition has been sometimes studiously adopted,

from a conviction that persuasion is more important than novelty, and from the hope that by this means memory might become an ally to virtue and piety.

I plead guilty to the charge of wishing to keep my fair countrywomen *entirely* British. I think that epithet infinitely more desirable than philosopher or cosmopolite. These latter terms can only be applied to a few in an honourable sense; and, if universally aspired to, must occasion the sacrifice of that part of our characters which is most valuable. Those who are merely pretenders to these distinctions are worse than worthless, they are *detestable;* but she who sets out with a humble yet firm resolution of "doing her duty in that state of life to "which it shall please God to call her," cannot fail of being respectable, however mean her station, however calamitous her

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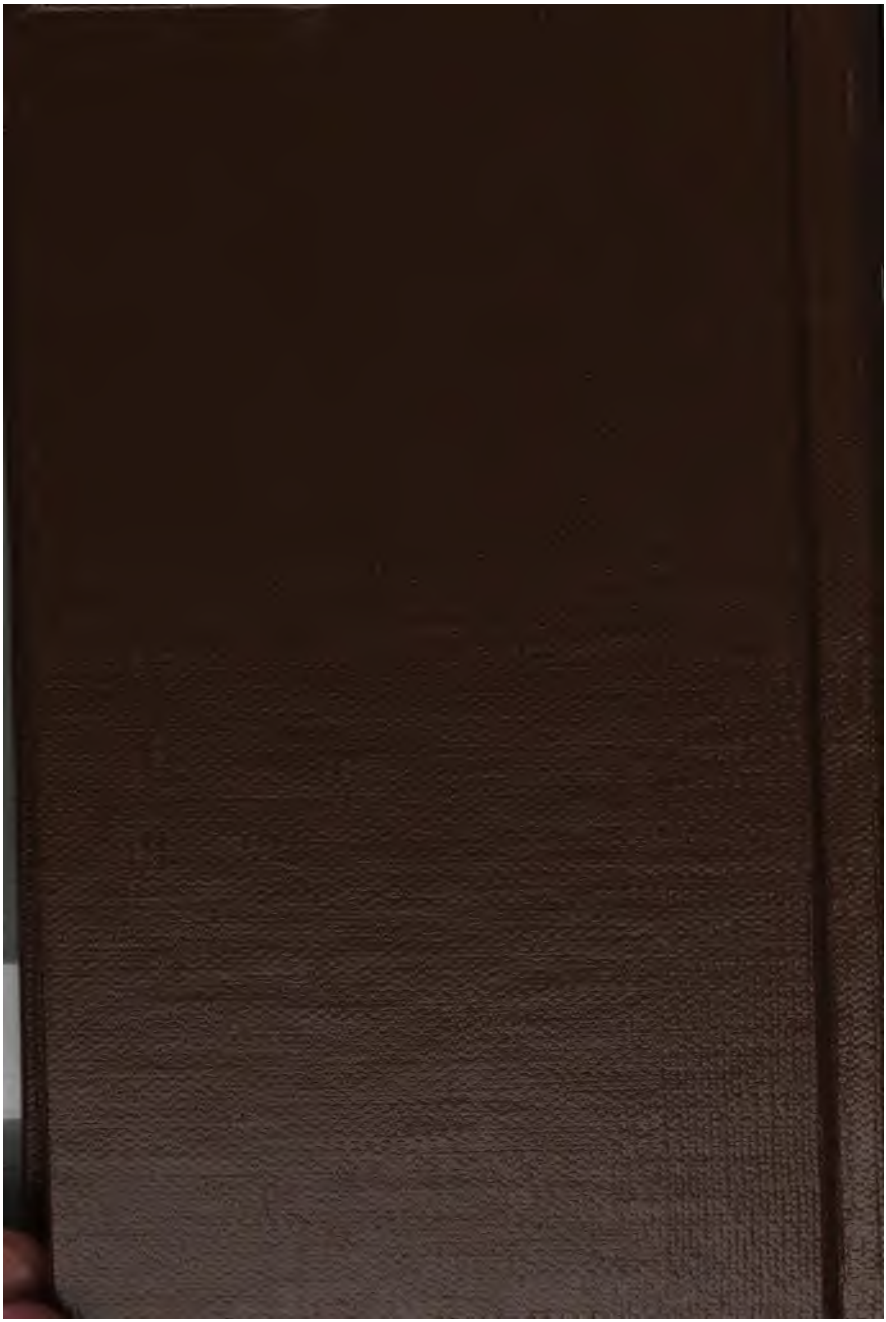
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